A

SOCRATIC DISCOURSE

ON

TRUTH AND FAITHFULNESS.

L Percival (T.)

A

SOCRATIC DISCOURSE

ON

TRUTH AND FAITHFULNESS;

IN WHICH

THE NATURE, EXTENT, AND OBLIGATION,

TOGETHER WITH THE

VARIOUS BRANCHES AND SUBORDINATIONS

OF THESE

MORAL DUTIES

ARE EXPLAINED, ILLUSTRATED,

AND ENFORCED BY

EXAMPLES:

BEING THE SEQUEL TO

A FATHER's INSTRUCTIONS.

Rem tibi Socraticæ poterunt ostendere chartæ.
------ *Quo virtus; quo ferat error.*
HOR.

WARRINGTON,
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MDCCLXXXI.

BRITISH MUSEUM

TO

THOMAS B. PERCIVAL,

THE FOLLOWING WORK,

INTENDED AS

A MEMORIAL

OF

PATERNAL LOVE,

AND AN

INCITEMENT

TO THE

STUDY, REVERENCE, AND PRACTICE

OF

FAITHFULNESS AND TRUTH,

IS INSCRIBED

BY

THE AUTHOR.

THE PREFACE.

THIS diſcourſe was written ſeveral years ago, for the uſe of the author's own family; and a few printed copies of it were diſtributed amongſt his particular friends. The additions, which he has ſince made, have induced him to commit it again to the preſs; not with any view to publication, but to ſerve, more commodiouſly, the purpoſes of paternal inſtruction. It conſtitutes the firſt part of a plan, which he has

has long had in contemplation, of teaching the moſt important branches of ethics, viz. VERACITY, FAITHFULNESS, JUSTICE, and BENEVOLENCE, in a ſyſtematic and comprehenſive manner, by EXAMPLES. But various cauſes have hitherto prevented, and may perhaps continue to prevent, the completion of his deſign: And finding himſelf in the ſituation, deſcribed by the Poet,

" Fond to begin, but ſtill to finiſh loath
" His half-writ ſcrolls, all eaten by the moth;" *

he heartily wiſhes that ſome moraliſt, of more leiſure and of ſuperior abilities, into whoſe hands this little piece may chance to fall, would execute, in its full extent, what is here ſo partially and imperfectly attempted.

* Thomſon's Caſtle of Indolence, Cant. II.

The

The ſeveral diſtinctions and ſubordinations of the ſocial duties may in this way, he apprehends, be more clearly underſtood, and longer remembered, than they are likely to be in the uſual mode of definition and amplification, without the aid of facts and illuſtrations: And the moral taſte and diſcernment of young perſons will thus be improved, at the ſame time that they are furniſhed with parallels of compariſon, by which to judge, with preciſion, of the merit and demerit of human actions. This will prove a powerful barrier againſt the degeneracy of their manners, which often originate from the ſeducing influence of vices, that wear the ſemblance of virtues, and are applauded as ſuch by the undiſtinguiſhing part of mankind. Even hiſtory itſelf, incautiouſly peruſed, may have a tendency to pervert the underſtanding, and to corrupt the native

native purity of the heart: For it preſents us, too often, with falſe and deluſive pictures; and by the gay colouring of the artiſt, excites our admiration of characters really odious, and of deeds which cannot be juſtified.

"We liſten all intent with fix'd delight,
"Marvelling he can with ſuch ſweet art unite
"The lights and ſhades of manners, wrong and right." *

To obviate error, is the firſt ſtep towards rectitude: And what error can be more dangerous, than to "*put good for evil, and evil for good?*" When Louis XIV was a boy, one of his companions related to him the account, which he had read, of the power and dignity of the

* Caſt. of Indolence, Cant. II.

Grand

Grand Seignior; and concluded by ſaying, that when any man had the preſumption or misfortune to offend him, he could, by a ſingle word, cauſe his eſtates to be confiſcated, or his head to be ſtruck off: And that he had a train of ſlaves, called mutes, who executed his commands with prompt and tacit obedience. "That were to be a king indeed!" cried Louis, with great emotion. The old Count de Grammont heard theſe words with indignation, and immediately replied, "Sire, within "my memory, three of theſe envied ſul-"tans have been ſtrangled by their own "mutes." The Duke de Montauzier was ſo well pleaſed with this noble freedom, that he forced himſelf through the crowd of courtiers, and openly thanked Grammont for his honeſt admonition. Thus the poiſon was counteracted, which had been

been inadvertently adminiſtered to the young monarch: A poiſon that, by its baneful operation, might gradually have transformed him into a Nero or Caligula. In our moral judgments, the abuſe of reaſon muſt end in depravity of principle; and it is probable, that the falſe ambition of the conqueror, the inſidious politics of the ſtateſman, the perſecuting zeal of the bigot, and the lawleſs honour of the duellift, with many other public wrongs, ſpring from this copious ſource of miſchief.

It is almoſt unneceſſary to point out this further advantage of the preſent plan, that by combining example with precept, it enlivens dull leſſons of morality; "brings them home to men's buſineſs and boſoms;" and gives to the impreſſions which

which they make, additional permanency and vigour.

The author has, in general, given his authorities for the facts, which he has related, that hiſtoric truth may be diſtinguiſhed from the fictions, introduced for the ſake of illuſtration: But in the ſtory of the king of Navarre, afterwards Henry IV of France, they have been unavoidably intermingled. The reference to Sully's Memoirs will, however, ſhew where the former ends, and the latter commences.

It is well known to the learned, that Socrates gave riſe to a new mode of inſtruction, in the ſchools of philoſophy; and that Plato and Xenophon, by recording the moral converſations of their amiable maſter, excited a taſte for dialogue, which

which has prevailed through all ſucceeding ages. The mode of exemplification, purſued in the preſent work, has neceſſarily occaſioned ſome deviation from each of theſe great originals; who are, indeed, themſelves ſo different, as to agree only in one common outline. But he has copied both in many particulars; eſpecially in the adoption of real characters, for the *dramatis perſonæ*, or ſpeakers in his diſcourſe. How far he has done juſtice to the talents or opinions of Philocles, it is not for him to determine: But if the ſentiments imputed to his late honoured friend be ſuch, as he would not have avowed; let it be remembered, that Plato alſo wrote, what Socrates diſclaimed;* and that the

* The LYSIS. When Socrates heard this dialogue of Plato read, in which he ſupported the principal character, "Gods!" he exclaimed, "how this young man makes me ſay what I never thought!"

author

author alone is anſwerable for whatever he has delivered.

MANCHESTER,
March 1, 1781.

OCCUPATI SUMUS OFFICIIS, SUBSECIVISQUE HORIS ISTA CURAMUS.

PLIN.

A

SOCRATIC DISCOURSE

ON

TRUTH AND FAITHFULNESS.

INTER SILVAS ACADEMI QUÆRERE VERUM.

HOR.

YOU have often been a witneſs, my dear ſon, of the pleaſure experienced by me, in the recollection of the academical years, which I paſſed at ——— in the purſuit of general ſcience, before I engaged in my profeſſional ſtudies at the univerſity of ———. And you have no leſs frequently heard me expreſs the higheſt veneration for the profound learning, and exalted character of Philocles, under whoſe tuition, the charms of knowledge firſt attracted my regard. I have lately reviſited thoſe ſcenes ſo delightful to my youth: But leaving to your conception the emotions which I felt, I ſhall relate to you a ſocratic converſation, that occurred there in my preſence,

between Philocles and your kinſman Sophron. This amiable youth, who is likely to reflect a luſtre on the ſacred office, to which, I truſt, he will ere long be called, had been reciting to his profeſſor an academical compoſition on the importance of TRUTH, and on the folly, infamy, and baſeneſs of LYING and DECEIT. And when he laid down the book, Philocles expreſſed an earneſt wiſh, that ſuch ſentiments might ever influence the heart, and direct the conduct of his pupil. But general rules, continued he, are inſufficient for our government in the diverſified and complicated occurrences of life: And if we be ambitious of acting with wiſdom, honour, and virtue, it is neceſſary that we ſhould make ourſelves acquainted with the various branches and ſubordinations of each moral duty. Let us, therefore, take a particular view of TRUTH, and of her inſeparable companion FAITHFULNESS. You are no novice in theſe ſubjects; and Euphronius, I am perſuaded, will be pleaſed to hear you exerciſed in the diſcuſſion of them.

I preſume you will concur with me in opinion, that MORAL TRUTH is the *conformity of our expreſſions to our thoughts*; and FAITHFULNESS, *that of our actions to our expreſſions:* And that LYING or FALSHOOD *is generally a mean, ſelfiſh, or malevolent, and always an unjuſtifiable endeavour to deceive another, by ſignifying or aſſerting that to be truth or fact, which is known or believed to be otherwiſe; and by making*

making promiſes, without any intention to perform them.

But if we believe our aſſertions or ſigns to be true, and they ſhould afterwards prove to be falſe, tell me, Sophron, are we then guilty of Lying?

No, replied Sophron; we ſhall have committed only an error or miſtake: For under ſuch circumſtances, we muſt have been deceived ourſelves; and could have had no deſign of impoſing upon others.

But is every breach of promiſe a Lie, continued Philocles?

I ſhould think not, anſwered Sophron, if the promiſe were made with ſincerity, and the violation of it be unavoidable.

Your diſtinction is juſt, ſaid Philocles; and there are alſo certain conditions, obvious to the general ſenſe of mankind, underſtood or implied in almoſt every promiſe, on which the performance muſt depend. Whang-to, emperor of China, who governed his people like a father, and regarded his own elevation and power as truſts delegated for their good, had a daughter who was his only child, and the darling of his old age. He promiſed her in marriage to Ouſan-quey, the ſon of his favourite mandarine, and that he would bequeath to him all his dominions as her dowry. Ouſan-quey was at

that time a youth of the moſt promiſing abilities and diſpoſitions; but the proſpect of royalty, and the adulation of a court, ſoon corrupted his heart. He became haughty, inſolent, and cruel; and the people anticipated, with horror, the tyranny which they muſt endure under his government. By the inſtitutions of the Chineſe, the great officers of ſtate may remonſtrate to the emperor, when his decrees are injurious to the public intereſt; and this privilege has often tended to abate the rigour of deſpotiſm. Whang-to heard, with grief and aſtoniſhment, the complaints of his mandarines againſt Ouſan-quey. He ſummoned him into his preſence, and being ſatisfied with the proofs of his demerit, he addreſſed the officers of ſtate in the following terms: "I engaged "my daughter in marriage, and promiſed the inhe-"ritance of my dominions to Ouſan-quey, a youth "who was wiſe, humane, and juſt. In departing "from virtue, he has cancelled theſe obligations, "and forfeited his title to both." Then turning to Ouſan-quey, he ſaid, "I command you to retire "from my court, and to paſs the remainder of your "days in the moſt diſtant province of my empire."

But is it not deemed peculiarly honourable, Sophron, to perform a promiſe, when paſſion or ſelf-intereſt ſtrongly incites us to the violation of it?

Nothing raiſes our admiration higher, ſaid Sophron; and I beg leave to relate to you a ſtory, which

which places this truth in a very ſtriking point of view. A Spaniſh cavalier, without any reaſonable provocation, aſſaſſinated a Mooriſh gentleman, and inſtantly fled from juſtice. He was vigorouſly purſued; but availing himſelf of a ſudden turn in the road, he leaped, unperceived, over a garden wall. The proprietor, who was alſo a Moor, happened to be, at that time, walking in the garden; and the Spaniard fell upon his knees before him, acquainted him with his caſe, and in the moſt pathetic manner implored concealment. The Moor liſtened to him with compaſſion, and generouſly promiſed his aſſiſtance. He then locked him in a ſummer-houſe, and left him, with an aſſurance that, when night approached, he would provide for his eſcape. A few hours afterwards, the dead body of his ſon was brought to him; and the deſcription of the murderer exactly agreed with the appearance of the Spaniard, whom he had then in cuſtody. He concealed the horror and ſuſpicion which he felt; and retiring to his chamber, remained there till midnight. Then going privately into the garden, he opened the door of the ſummer-houſe, and thus accoſted the cavalier: "Chriſtian," ſaid he, "the youth whom you have "murdered was my only ſon. Your crime merits "the ſevereſt puniſhment. But I have ſolemnly "pledged my word for your ſecurity; and I diſdain "to violate even a raſh engagement with a cruel "enemy." He conducted the Spaniard to the ſtables, and furniſhing him with one of his ſwifteſt mules,

"Fly," ſaid he, "whilſt the darkneſs of the night "conceals you. Your hands are polluted with blood; "but GOD is juſt; and I humbly thank him that "my faith is unſpotted, and that I have reſigned "judgment unto him." *

When Sophron had finiſhed this narrative, I took the liberty of obſerving that Faithfulneſs is a virtue, which we ſometimes meet with in very abandoned characters, who are neither influenced by a ſenſe of religious, nor of moral obligation. In ſuch perſons it is founded on certain ideas of HONOUR, which originally ſpring from the beſt natural principles. After the battle of Culloden, in the year 1745, a reward of thirty thouſand pounds was offered to any one, who ſhould diſcover or deliver up the young Pretender. He had taken refuge with the Kennedies, two common thieves; who protected him with fidelity; robbed for his ſupport; and often went in diſguiſe to Inverneſs, to buy proviſions for him. A conſiderable time afterwards, one of theſe men, who had reſiſted the temptation of thirty thouſand pounds, was hanged for ſtealing a cow, of the value of thirty ſhillings. †

But I apprehend, reſumed Sophron, with much modeſty, that there are caſes in which it would be more culpable to fulfil, than to violate a promiſe.

* See Hiſtor. Mirror.

† See Pennant's Tour in Scotland.

To

To this propoſition Philocles gave his full aſſent, and illuſtrated it by the following ſuppoſititious caſe. A brace of loaded piſtols have been left in my hands by a friend, to whom I have engaged to reſtore them, whenever he ſhall make the demand. But if he claim them when intoxicated with liquor, or mad with paſſion and reſentment, it is evident that the performance of my promiſe would not only be weak, but extremely reprehenſible: And my friend himſelf, in his calm and ſober moments, would be amongſt the firſt to charge me with all the miſchiefs, occaſioned by my erroneous ſenſe of duty. Haſty declarations and raſh aſſeverations are ſometimes made by good men, who cannot however reaſonably or conſcientiouſly fulfil them. When Jeſus had waſhed the feet of ſeveral of his diſciples, he came to Simon Peter: "*And Peter ſaid unto him, Lord, doſt thou waſh my* "*feet? Jeſus anſwered and ſaid, What I do, thou* "*knoweſt not now; but thou ſhalt know hereafter.* "*Peter ſaid unto him, Thou ſhalt never waſh my feet!* "*Jeſus anſwered him, If I waſh thee not, thou haſt* "*no part with me. Simon Peter ſaid unto him, Lord,* "*not my feet only, but alſo my hands and my head.*" * Nor can even vows, however ſolemn, be binding, when the object of them is the commiſſion of an atrocious crime. David, in revenge for an inſult

* John, Chap. XIII.

offered him by Nabal, vowed that he would put to the ſword every male of his family. But his wrath was afterwards appeaſed; and he became ſo ſenſible of the injuſtice of his deſign, that he ſaid, "*Bleſſed be the* LORD, *who has kept his ſervant from evil.*" *

It ſhould ſeem, that the Roman emperor Trajan thought it might be criminal in his officers, under certain circumſtances, to maintain the allegiance which they had ſworn to him. On the appointment of Suberanus to be captain of the royal guard, he preſented him with a ſword, as the badge of his fealty, ſaying, "Let this be drawn in my defence, "if I rule according to equity; but if otherwiſe, "it may be employed againſt me." †

The concluſion concerning the obſervance of promiſes, may be extended to Veracity, notwithſtanding the extravagant declaration of one of the Fathers, "that he would not violate truth, though he were ſure to gain heaven by it." Whenever, from the concurrence of extraordinary circumſtances, the practice of one virtue is rendered incompatible with the performance of another, of much higher obligation, it is evident that the inferior muſt yield to the ſuperior duty. An example will elucidate, and evince the juſtneſs of this obſervation.

* 1 Sam. xxv. 22. † Plin.

After

After the horrid maſſacre of the Huguenots in France, which began on St. Bartholomew's day, 1572, the king of Navarre was very rigorouſly guarded, by the order of the queen-mother, Catharine de Medicis. But one day, when he was hunting near Senlis, during the heat of the chace, he ſeized a favourable opportunity of making his eſcape; and galloping through the woods, with a few faithful friends, amongſt whom was young Roſny, afterwards duke of Sully, he croſſed the Seine at Poiſſy, * and fled to the caſtle of a nobleman, who was a zealous, though ſecret proteſtant, and ſtrongly attached to his intereſt. Troops of horſe were ſoon diſpatched, different ways, in purſuit of him. One of theſe detachments ſtopped at the gates of the caſtle, where Henry was then refreſhing himſelf; and the captain demanded permiſſion to ſearch for him, ſhewing the royal mandate to bring the head of Henry, and to put his attendants to the ſword. Reſiſtance was evidently vain; and compliance would have been a breach of hoſpitality, friendſhip, and humanity; at the ſame time that it muſt have proved fatal to the intereſts of the reformed religion, and to the whole body of proteſtants in France, who had no other protector but the king of Navarre. The nobleman, therefore, without heſitation, and with an undaunted countenance, inſtantly ſaid, "Waſte not your time, "ſir, in fruitleſs ſearches. The king of Navarre,

* See Sully's Memoirs.

"with

" with his friends, paſſed this way about two hours " ago; and if you ſet ſpurs to your horſe, you will " overtake him before the night approaches." The captain and his troop, ſatisfied with this anſwer, rode off at full ſpeed; and the king was then left at liberty to provide for his ſafety, by diſguiſing himſelf, and taking a different rout.

Under ſuch circumſtances as you have deſcribed, all mankind, obſerved Sophron, would condemn a ſtrict adherence to Truth. But what do you think of the conduct of the Portugueſe ſlave, whoſe breach of veracity, and even perjury, is extolled by Abbé Raynal, in his Hiſtory of the European Settlements. This negro, who had fled into the woods to enjoy the liberty which was his natural right, having learned that his old maſter was arreſted, and likely to be condemned for a capital crime, came into the court of juſtice; aſſumed the guilt of the fact; ſuffered himſelf to be impriſoned; brought falſe, though judicial proofs of his crime; and was executed inſtead of his beloved maſter.

The diſapprobation of falſhood, in this inſtance, anſwered Philocles, is ſuppreſſed for a while, by our admiration of the affection, gratitude, generoſity, and greatneſs of mind diſplayed by the negro. We lament the bondage of ſuch a hero; and regret that his exalted virtues were not diſplayed on a more important and honourable occaſion. But when theſe

firſt

firſt emotions are over, and we diſpaſſionately reflect on the conduct of the ſlave, we muſt condemn it as an unjuſtifiable ſacrifice of truth, of his own life, and of the duty which he owed to ſociety. The divine command, "*Thou ſhalt not bear falſe witneſs* AGAINST *thy neighbour*," cannot ſurely be ſuppoſed to imply, that he may bear *falſe witneſs in his* FAVOUR; becauſe this would be to forbid private injury, and to authoriſe public wrongs. Judicial teſtimony, in the preſent circumſtances of the moral world, is eſſential to the well-being of ſociety; and to leſſen the general credibility of it, by introducing into courts of law falſhood and perjury, is a high crime againſt the ſtate, and ſeverely puniſhed in all countries which have emerged from barbariſm. Beſides, the good of the community requires that juſtice ſhould be executed on the offender himſelf, to prevent him from committing other crimes: And it would give encouragement to vice, if an innocent perſon, perhaps tired of life, or influenced by enthuſiaſtic notions of honour, friendſhip, or love, might ſuffer for another who is guilty.

The certainty of puniſhment, even in miſdemeanors, is ſtrongly urged by the Marquis de Beccaria, the great advocate for judicial lenity. And he thinks the forgiveneſs of the injured party himſelf, ſhould not interrupt the execution of juſtice. "This may be an act of good-nature and humanity," he obſerves, "but it is contrary to the good of the public.

"For

" For although a private citizen may diſpenſe with " ſatisfaction for his private injury, he cannot remove " the neceſſity of public example. The right of " puniſhing belongs not to any one individual in " particular, but to the ſociety in general, or the " ſovereign who repreſents that ſociety: And a man " may renounce his own portion of this right, but " he cannot give up that of others."

The conduct of the negro, ſaid Sophron, however erroneous it might be in point of wiſdom, or unjuſtifiable with reſpect to its morality, was perfectly generous and diſintereſted. But the ſame elegant writer, who records this fact, has related another example of the violation of truth, from motives purely *ſelfiſh*, which I cannot condemn, though I know not how to juſtify. I will endeavour to recollect, and to repeat the ſtory. A Britiſh ſerjeant was taken priſoner by the ſavages in America; who prepared themſelves to put him to death, with all the barbarity which their ſkill in torture could invent. Shocked with the view of the horrid ſufferings which awaited him, he thus addreſſed the Indians: " Mighty warriors, your preparations are vain, for " my body is invulnerable; and if you will ſet me " at liberty, I will teach you how to become ſo. " Think not that I impoſe upon you by falſe preten- " ſions. I am willing that you ſhould try upon me " an experiment, which may ſatisfy your doubts. " Let the chief, who holds my hanger, now ſtrike

" with

"with all his force. I equally defy the ſharpneſs "of the inſtrument, and the ſtrength of his arm." Whilſt he was ſaying theſe words, he bent his head, and laid bare his neck. The Indian eagerly advanced; and by one furious blow, ſevered the head from the body. Thus the poor ſerjeant, by his preſence of mind, exchanged lingering tortures for an eaſy and inſtantaneous death.

Euphronius here remarked, that the ſtory is of doubtful authority, by the confeſſion of the Abbé himſelf. But admitting the truth of it, continued he, for the ſake of argument, what moraliſt can be ſo rigid as not to deem the conduct of the ſerjeant at leaſt excuſable? Perhaps no man, in ſimilar circumſtances, would have acted differently, if he poſſeſſed ſufficient compoſure to deviſe, or addreſs to practiſe ſuch an expedient. The caſe is not analogous to that of martyrdom for religion. The horrid ſufferings to be endured, in this inſtance, could anſwer no good end; and ſociety received not the leaſt injury, either immediate or remote, by the evaſion of them.

Recollecting an hiſtorical fact of unqueſtionable truth, and ſtrictly applicable to the point in debate, I requeſted permiſſion to relate it. When Columbus and his crew were caſt away on an iſland, more than thirty leagues from Hiſpaniola, nothing remained to them in proſpect, but to end their miſerable days with naked ſavages, far from their country and their friends.

friends. To add to theſe calamities, the natives began ſoon to murmur at the reſidence of the Spaniards amongſt them; the ſupport of whom became burthenſome to men, ignorant of agriculture, and unaccuſtomed to exertion or induſtry: They brought in proviſions with reluctance, furniſhed them ſparingly, and even threatened entirely to withhold them. Such a reſolution muſt have occaſioned inevitable deſtruction to the Spaniards; but Columbus prevented it by a happy device, that revived all the admiration and reverence, with which the Indians firſt regarded theſe ſtrangers. By his ſkill in aſtronomy, he knew there was ſhortly to be a total eclipſe of the moon. On the day before it happened, he aſſembled the principal perſons of the diſtrict, and after reproaching them for their defection from thoſe, whom they had lately revered, he told them that the Spaniards were ſervants of the Great Spirit, who dwells in heaven: That, offended at their refuſal to ſupport the objects of his peculiar favour, the Deity was preparing to puniſh their crime with exemplary ſeverity; and that the moon ſhould be darkened that very night, and aſſume a bloody hue, as a ſign of the Divine wrath, and an emblem of the vengeance ready to fall on them. To this marvellous prediction, ſome of the barbarians liſtened with careleſs indifference; others, with credulous aſtoniſhment: But when the moon began gradually to withdraw her light, and at length appeared of a red colour, all were ſtruck with terror. They ran with conſternation to their houſes,

and

and returning to Columbus loaded with proviſions, threw them inſtantly at his feet, conjuring him to intercede with the Great Spirit, to avert the deſtruction with which they were threatened. Columbus, ſeeming to be moved by their intreaties, promiſed to comply with their deſire. The eclipſe went off, the moon recovered its ſplendour; and from that time, the Spaniards were not only furniſhed profuſely with proviſions, but treated with the moſt ſuperſtitious attention.* This ſolemn deceit of Columbus may be juſtified by the rights of neceſſity. Shipwrecked on a diſtant coaſt, in the proſecution of an enterprize, which, in his mind, appears to have originated from honourable and uſeful views, and deſtitute of every means of ſupplying himſelf and his aſſociates with ſuſtenance, he had a claim to the protection, aſſiſtance, and ſupport of the people who were ſpectators of his calamity. And it was a happy fertility of genius, which ſuggeſted to him an expedient, far preferable to the force of arms. But I feel a ſecret wiſh, that this truly great man had mixed leſs of falſity with his artifice. He might have reprehended the Indians for their want of hoſpitality, alarmed their fears by his prediction, and excited their wonder and reverence by its fulfilment, without denouncing, in ſuch unguarded terms, the immediate vengeance of Heaven. Truth is ſo important, and of ſo delicate a nature, that every poſſible precaution ſhould be em-

* See Robertſon's Hiſt. of America, Vol. I. Book 2.

ployed

ployed to extenuate its violation, although the ſacrifice be made to duties which ſuperſede its obligation.

Philocles very obligingly thanked me for recalling to his memory ſo pertinent a fact. He then turned to his pupil, and aſked him what he thought of the maxim, which ſome perſons have adopted, "that faith is not to be kept with rogues or traitors?"

I think the maxim, replied Sophron, falſe in itſelf, and highly injurious to ſociety. For, independent of the licentiouſneſs and cruelty, to which it might give riſe, a man owes to his own honour and peace of mind, except on very extraordinary occaſions, the ſtrict performance of his promiſe. And this opinion ſeems to have influenced the conduct of the great Viſcount Turenne, and of Sir Richard Herbert. The former was attacked one night by robbers near Paris, who ſtripped him of his money, watch, and rings. He engaged to give them a hundred *louis d'ors*, if they would return him a ring, of little intrinſic worth, but on which he ſet a particular value. The highwaymen complied; and one of them had the boldneſs to go to his houſe the ſucceeding day, and in the midſt of a large company to demand, in a whiſper, the performance of his promiſe. The Viſcount gave orders for the money to be paid; and ſuffered the villain to eſcape, before he related the adventure.*

* See Ramſay's Life of Turenne.

Sir

Sir Richard Herbert, being ſent by Edward the Fourth, to reduce certain rebels in North Wales, laid ſiege to Harlech caſtle, in Merionethſhire; a fortreſs ſo ſtrong, that he deſpaired of taking it but by blockade and famine. The captain of it offered to ſurrender, on condition that Sir Richard *would do what he could to ſave his life*. The condition was accepted; and Sir Richard brought the commander to the king, requeſting his majeſty to grant him a pardon, as the expectation of this favour had induced him to yield up an important caſtle, which he might have defended. Edward replied to Sir Richard Herbert, "That as he had no power, by his com-"miſſion, to pardon any one, he might therefore, "after the repreſentation hereof to his ſovereign, "deliver him up to juſtice." Sir Richard Herbert anſwered, "He had not yet done *the beſt he could* "*for him*; and therefore moſt humbly deſired his "highneſs to do one of two things; either to put him "again in the caſtle where he had been, and com-"mand ſome other to take him out; or, if his "highneſs would not do ſo, to take his life for the "captain's, that being the laſt proof he could give, "that he had uſed his utmoſt endeavour to fulfil his "promiſe." The king, finding himſelf ſo much urged, pardoned the captain, but beſtowed on Sir Richard Herbert no other reward for his ſervice. *

* See the Life of Lord Herbert of Cherbury.

Theſe gentlemen, ſaid Philocles, diſplayed a delicate ſenſe of honour; and, though I am dubious, whether the conduct of Monſieur Turenne has the ſanction of the great Roman caſuiſt,* yet, according to my judgment, both he and Sir Richard Herbert acted conformably to the laws of reaſon and rectitude. For every *lawful* promiſe, made by one poſſeſſing preſence of mind and the free uſe of reaſon, no event or conſideration ſucceeding, which an unbiaſſed underſtanding would deem ſufficient to render it *unlawful*, ought to be religiouſly obſerved. † But promiſes, extorted by fear, and that clearly contravene our duty to ſociety, are void in themſelves: Thus an engagement made with ſincerity, under the ſtrong impreſſions of terror, to a highwayman or murderer, not to bear teſtimony againſt him, can be of no validity; becauſe there ſubſiſts an antecedent claim of the community, which cannot be diſpenſed with by any of its members. I have ſuppoſed the engagement to be ſincere; for, if entered into with a previous deſign of violation, a breach of truth and faithfulneſs is in ſome degree committed, notwithſtanding its injuſtice or illegality.

* *Si prædonibus pactum pro capite pretium non attuleris, nulla fraus eſt, ne ſi juratus quidem id non feceris.* Cic. de Off. Lib. III. Cap. 29.

† See Grove's Mor. Philoſophy.

But

But when you deliver to another as a certain truth, what you believe to be falſe, are you guilty of lying, ſhould it afterwards prove to be true?

Yes, anſwered Sophron; becauſe my intention is to deceive, and to make a ſuppoſed falſhood paſs for truth. Chian-fu was an officer in the guards of the emperor of Japan. He had formed a tender connection with one of the ladies of the court, and was on the point of marriage, when a formidable inſurrection, in a diſtant iſland of the empire, occaſioned by the tyranny and cruel exactions of the government, obliged him to leave the capital without delay, to aſſume his poſt in the royal army. The war was protracted through various cauſes; and he bore with great impatience ſo long an abſence from his miſtreſs. By the influence of a bribe, he obtained permiſſion from the commander in chief to return to Jeddo, for a few weeks; during which time he hoped to celebrate his nuptials. But dreading leſt the emperor ſhould reſent his deſertion of the army, at ſo critical a conjuncture, he pretended that he brought tidings from the general of an important advantage, gained over the enemy; which was likely ſoon to be ſucceeded by a compleat victory. Theſe accounts were founded on probability, not on truth. His falſhoods, however, procured him the moſt favourable reception at court. He married the lady; and after a week ſpent in feſtivity, prepared for his departure to join the army. An expreſs at this time arrived,

with the news of the entire defeat of the inſurgents; but no mention was made of any previous diſpatches by Chian-fu. The emperor ſuſpected that he had been guilty of deceit. He was ſtrictly examined; confeſſed his crime, and the motives of it; and was condemned to ſuffer immediate death. For lying is a capital offence, by the laws of Japan.

If truth, reſumed Philocles, be an agreement between our words and thoughts, are you under an obligation to expreſs all your thoughts?

No, ſaid Sophron, prudence often forbids it; and it is no violation of truth to conceal thoſe thoughts, and that knowledge, with which another has no right to be acquainted. On a particular occaſion, the Jews demanded of Jeſus, "*What ſign "ſheweſt thou unto us? Jeſus anſwered and ſaid, "Deſtroy this temple, and in three days I will raiſe it "up. Then ſaid the Jews, Forty and ſix years was "this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in "three days? But he ſpake of the temple of his body. "When therefore he was ariſen from the dead, his "diſciples remembered that he had ſaid this unto "them.*" *

Sometimes, when improper or treacherous queſtions are aſked, ſilence would be no leſs dangerous, than an explicit declaration of our ſenti-

* John, Chap. 11. Ver. 18.

ments.

ments. In theſe caſes, we ſhall be juſtified in the uſe of ſuch evaſions, as do not contradict the truth. When the chief prieſts and ſcribes inquired of our Saviour, whether it was lawful to pay tribute unto Cæſar? "*He perceived their craftineſs, and ſaid unto them, "Why tempt ye me? Shew me a penny: Whoſe image "and ſuperſcription hath it? They anſwered and ſaid, "Cæſar's. And he ſaid unto them, Render unto Cæſar "the things which be Cæſar's, and unto* GOD *the things "which be* GOD'S. *And they could not take hold of his "words before the people: And they marvelled at his "anſwers, and held their peace.*"

Under the reign of the cruel and bigoted queen Mary, the princeſs Elizabeth, her ſiſter, ſuffered a variety of perſecutions, on account of her ſteady attachment to the proteſtant religion. It is ſaid, ſhe was one day interrogated concerning the Lord's Supper; and that ſhe returned the following prudent, and evaſive anſwer:

"Chriſt was the word that ſpake it;
"He took the bread and brake it;
"And what the word did make it,
"That I believe and take it." *

Philocles expreſſed much ſatisfaction in the judicious diſtinction, which his pupil had made, and obſerved, that the conduct of the princeſs Elizabeth

* Walpole's Cat. of Royal and Noble Authors.

is fully juſtified by the example of the apoſtle Paul, in circumſtances not very diſſimilar. The Athenians had a law, which rendered it capital to promulgate any new Gods: And when Paul preached to them JESUS and the RESURRECTION, he was accuſed of having broken this law, and of being a "*ſetter forth of ſtrange Gods*;" and was carried before the Areopagus, a court of judicature, which took cogniſance of all criminal matters, and was in a particular manner charged with the care of the eſtabliſhed religion. An impoſtor, in ſuch a ſituation, would have retracted his doctrine to ſave his life; and an enthuſiaſt would have ſacrificed his life, without attempting to ſave it by innocent means. But the Apoſtle wiſely avoided both extremes; and availing himſelf of an inſcription "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD," which he had ſeen upon an altar in the city, he pleaded in his own defence, "*Whom ye ignorantly worſhip, him declare I unto you.*" By this preſence of mind, he evaded the law, and eſcaped condemnation, without departing from the truth of the Goſpel, or violating the honour of GOD.*

Though I am no general admirer, continued Philocles, of the maxims of morality delivered by Lord Cheſterfield, yet I think his remarks on the preſent ſubject peculiarly worthy of attenti

* Vid. Acts, XVII. 23. Alſo Lord Lyttelton's Obſervations on the Converſion and Apoſtleſhip of St. Paul.

"The

"The prudence and neceſſity," ſays the noble author, "of frequently concealing the truth, inſen-"ſibly ſeduces people to violate it. It is the only "art of mean capacities, and the only refuge of "mean ſpirits. Whereas concealing the truth, upon "proper occaſions, is as prudent and as innocent, "as telling a lie, upon any occaſion, is infamous "and fooliſh. I will ſtate you a caſe in your own "department. Suppoſe you are employed at a fo-"reign court, and that the miniſter of that court is "abſurd or impertinent enough to aſk you, what "your inſtructions are; will you tell him a lie, "which as ſoon as found out, and found out it cer-"tainly will be, muſt deſtroy your credit, blaſt your "character, and render you uſeleſs there? No. "Will you tell him the truth then, and betray your "truſt? As certainly, No. But you will anſwer, "with firmneſs, That you are ſurpriſed at ſuch a "queſtion; that you are perſuaded he does not ex-"pect an anſwer to it; but that at all events, he "certainly will not have one. Such an anſwer will "give him confidence in you; he will conceive an "opinion of your veracity, of which opinion you "may afterwards make very honeſt and fair ad-"vantages."

Philocles now proceeded to interrogate his pupil, whether falſity, when in jeſt, is to be deemed a lie? But Sophron declined the queſtion, as too nice for his deciſion; and deſired to hear the ſentiments of Phi-

locles, who delivered them in the following terms. Wit and irony, raillery and humour, are often deviations from the ſtrict rules of veracity: But they are allowed by common conſent; and, under proper reſtrictions, they contribute to enliven converſation, and to improve our manners. But jocularity is certainly culpable, and may be deemed a ſpecies of lying, when it is intended to deceive, without any good end in view; and eſpecially, with the ungenerous one of diverting ourſelves at the painful expence of another. The practice alſo may lead to more criminal falſhoods; and it is related with honour of Ariſtides, that he held truth to be ſo ſacred, *ut ne joco quidem mentiretur.*

Some jocular lies have produced the moſt ſerious and affecting conſequences; of which I will give you an example or two, in the youthful frolics of Hilario, a nobleman who now looks back, with ſorrow and regret, on the ſufferings occaſioned by his levity. When he was a ſtudent at Cambridge, he went at midnight crying *Fire, fire,* to the chamber door of one of the fellows of ———, a gentleman univerſally admired for his literary and poetical abilities, but who was of a timid and melancholy diſpoſition. The gentleman awaked out of a ſound ſleep, and, attentive only to the firſt ſuggeſtions of fear, leaped through the window, at the hazard of loſing his life by the fall. Not long after this tranſaction, Hilario went up to London; and dining in a mixed company of perſons of faſhion, he happened to ſit near a grave old gentleman,

tleman, who took the firſt opportunity of making particular inquiries concerning a youth, then at Cambridge, whom he knew to be intimately acquainted with this nobleman. Hilario inſtantly ſuſpected, that the ſerious Don was a rich uncle of his friend; and determined that he would give ſuch an account of the nephew, as ſhould occaſion a ſolemn letter of reproof, over which he hoped to regale himſelf, on his return to college. He therefore jocularly ſaid, that his companion was a fine jolly fellow, always forming connections with the girls; that he loved to rattle the dice; and that he had lately loſt his next quarter's allowance, which would lower his courage at play, for ſome time to come. From the alteration which he perceived in the ſtranger's countenance, he was aſſured of the ſucceſs of his *hum*, an abſurd term given to this ſhameful kind of lie: And, when he got back to Cambridge, he haſtened to the apartment of his friend, to enjoy the laughter which he ſhould raiſe at his expence. But how was he ſhocked to find him in the delirium of a fever, occaſioned by a billet, which had been delivered the preceding day, purporting, "That Lucinda had juſt beſtowed her hand, "upon a perſon much more deſerving of her affec- "tions, than he had been repreſented to her father "by Hilario, his aſſociate in pleaſure, extravagance, "and profligacy."

By ſuch thoughtleſs, and unjuſtifiable violations of truth, Hilario was often wounding his own peace of mind,

mind, and involving his connections in diſtreſs. He was, however, at length compelled to correct this criminal habit, through the horror which he felt, on having given riſe to a fatal duel between two brothers, by jocularly inſinuating to one of them, that he was rivalled in the affections of his miſtreſs, by the other.

It would be happy, ſaid I, if we could aſcertain the reſtrictions, under which theſe ſallies of frolic and jocularity may be indulged with innocence. One general rule may, I think, be admitted, that the entertainment, which we thus create to ourſelves, ſhould be ſuch only as will be a future ſubject of mirth even to thoſe, who are the preſent ſufferers by it. But, to uſe the words of an excellent moraliſt, "as every action may produce effects, over which "human power has no influence, and which human "ſagacity cannot foreſee; we ſhould not lightly "venture to the verge of evil; nor ſtrike at others, "though with a reed, leſt, like the rod of Moſes, "it become a ſerpent in our hands." *

Philocles now purſued the ſubject, by interrogating his pupil concerning the nature of EQUIVOCATION; which Sophron defined to be a mean expedient to avoid the declaration of truth, without verbally telling a lie. An equivocation, ſaid he, conſiſts of ſuch expreſſions, as admit of more than one meaning.

* Dr. Hawkſworth.

The

The ſpeaker uſes them in one ſenſe, and deſigns that the hearer ſhould underſtand them in another. Cicero mentions a certain perſon, who made a truce with the enemy for thirty days, and treacherouſly evaded his agreement, by laying waſte the country during the nights; alledging, that the truce was for ſo many *days*, not nights.* Such an equivocation as this, has all the guilt, and infamy of a lie; but I feel myſelf inclined to pardon the duplicity practiſed by a gentleman, on the following occaſion. He was returning home from the aſſizes at York, and was attacked on the road by a highwayman, to whom he delivered a ſmall purſe of money. The robber told him, that he ſhould not be ſatisfied with a few guineas; and ſternly demanded the ſum, which he knew he had received, and then carried about him. The gentleman, with great apparent terror, drew out of his pocket a leathern bag, and giving it to the highwayman, ſaid, "*Take what you want*, but ſpare my life." The robber eagerly received it, and was tranſported with the value of his acquiſition. He rode off with it, through bye lanes, till he arrived at a place of ſecurity. There he ſtopped to examine his booty, which to his aſtoniſhment he found to conſiſt only of a quantity of halfpence, together with a copy of the dying ſpeech and earneſt exhortations of a malefactor, who had been executed the preceding day for robbery.

* Vid. Cicero de Officiis, Lib. 1. Cap. 13.

Can

Can you acquit me, Philocles, ſaid I, of the criminality of equivocation, when, in the exerciſe of my profeſſional duties, I ſtudy, by chearful looks and ambiguous words, to remove from my patients the horrors of deſpair, to mitigate the apprehenſions of danger, and to deceive them into hope; that, by adminiſtering a cordial to the drooping ſpirit, I may ſmooth the bed of death, or revive even expiring life? For there are maladies, which rob the Philoſopher of fortitude, and the Chriſtian of conſolation.

From my heart I acquit you, anſwered Philocles, with his wonted humanity. You do a kindneſs, not a wrong, to the perſon whom you thus deceive; and may reaſonably preſuppoſe his future approbation of that conduct, which meets with the preſent acquieſcence of all his friends. The amiable and elegant Pliny, who had the niceſt ſenſe of honour, recites with applauſe, in a letter to Nepos, a ſtory, which may perhaps contribute to ſatisfy your mind, and remove your ſcruples.

The huſband of the celebrated Arria, Cæcinna Pætus, was very dangerouſly ill. Her ſon was alſo ſick at the ſame time; and died. He was a youth of uncommon accompliſhments; aud fondly beloved by his parents. Arria prepared and conducted his funeral in ſuch a manner, that her huſband remained entirely ignorant of the mournful event, which occaſioned that ſolemnity. Pætus often inquired, with

anxiety,

anxiety, about his ſon; to whom ſhe chearfully replied, that he had ſlept well, and was better. But if her tears, too long reſtrained, were burſting forth, ſhe inſtantly retired, to give vent to her grief; and when again compoſed, ſhe returned to Pætus with dry eyes, and a placid countenance, quitting, as it were, all the tender feelings of the mother, at the threſhold of her huſband's chamber.*

But, addreſſing himſelf to Sophron, is it not a ſpecies of equivocation, and a breach of faithfulneſs, continued Philocles, when we do not perform our promiſes, according to the plain and obvious meaning of them?

Without doubt it is, anſwered Sophron. The moraliſt whom I before quoted, relates, that ten Romans, who had been taken in the battle of Cannæ, were ſent by Hannibal to the ſenate, to propoſe an exchange of priſoners. Before they ſet out, each of them engaged, by an oath, to return to the camp of the Carthaginians, if the embaſſy ſhould prove ineffectual. The ſenate rejected the offers of Hannibal; and nine of the priſoners honourably rendered themſelves up to him. But the tenth refuſed to return, on pretence that he had already diſcharged himſelf of his oath. For it ſeems that he went back to the camp of the Carthaginians, ſoon after he quitted

* Plin. Epiſt. 16. Lib. III.

it,

it, to fetch ſome neceſſaries, which he had deſignedly left behind, that he might be able to plead his having complied, literally, with the terms of his engagement. But the ſenate diſdained the deceit, and commanded the artful wretch to be ſent bound to Hannibal.

Mental, and other private reſervations neither abſolve, nor even extenuate the guilt of lying. When the unfortunate Mary queen of Scotland was married to the dauphin of France, the king, his father, ſolemnly ratified every article, inſiſted upon by the Scotch parliament, for preſerving the independence of their nation, and for ſecuring the ſucceſſion of the crown to the houſe of Hamilton. But Mary, by his perſuaſion, had antecedently and privately ſubſcribed three deeds, by which, ſhe conſigned the kingdom of Scotland, on failure of her own iſſue, to his family; declaring all her promiſes, to the contrary, to be void.* The remark of Biſhop Taylor may be adopted, as the beſt comment on tranſactions of this infamous nature. If the words be a *lye* without *reſervation*, they are ſo with it: For this does not alter the words themſelves; nor the meaning of the words; nor the purpoſe of him who delivers them. †

* Lord Kaims's Hiſtory of Man, Vol. IV. p. 158.

† Ductor Dubitant. p. 498.

But

But in what light are we to regard the ſtratagems, falſhood, and acts of deceit, which have been practiſed in war, and often with applauſe, both in ancient and modern times?

In reply to this intereſting queſtion, Philocles obſerved, that war is ſeldom founded in juſtice; and that, therefore, we cannot be ſurpriſed that it ſhould occaſion, amongſt thoſe who wage it, a ſuſpenſion of the common laws of morality. The fraudulent exploits which are practiſed, by the tacit conſent, as it were, of the parties, may dazzle and ſurpriſe a ſuperficial obſerver; but a ſerious, honeſt mind, will generally condemn them, as inconſiſtent with the obligations of religion and virtue; and, except under very particular circumſtances, injurious to the contending powers themſelves. For, as integrity is the beſt policy in the conduct of individuals towards each other, it will appear to be equally ſo in the tranſactions between ſtates, and communities, if an extenſive view be taken of their great and permanent intereſts. Cicero, in one of his dialogues, introduces Scipio as maintaining the following excellent maxim: *Non modo* FALSUM *eſſe illud,* SINE INJURIA *non poſſe, ſed hoc veriſſimum, ſine* SUMMA JUSTITIA *rempublicam regi non poſſe.* "It is ſo far from being "true that government cannot be carried on with- "out injury to others, that nothing is more cer- "tain, than that it cannot be well adminiſtered "without an inviolable adherence to the ſtricteſt "juſtice."

" juſtice." And the propriety of this obſervation ſeems to be acknowledged, in ſome of the regulations of war, now univerſally adopted in civilized countries.

But a diſtinction ſhould be made between art or ſtratagem, and perfidy or falſhood. The wiſeſt and beſt moraliſts admit, that we may deceive our enemies, when we have a juſt cauſe of war, by any ſuch ſigns as import no profeſſion of communicating our ſentiments to them. Thus I have heard that the duke of Marlborough, when he commanded the allied army in Germany, called a council of war, on a particular occaſion, to determine whether he ſhould attack the enemy on the ſucceeding day. His general officers were unanimous in recommending the meaſure; but the duke expreſſed his objections to it in the ſtrongeſt terms; and the council ſubmitted to his ſuperior judgment. When he retired into his tent, prince Eugene followed him, and lamented the diſgrace in which ſuch a deciſion would involve them. " My reſolution," ſaid the duke, " is fixed to give " battle to-morrow; and I ſhall inſtantly iſſue the " neceſſary orders. But I oppoſed this plan in coun- " cil, becauſe I had received ſecret information, that " our enemies had concerted the means of becoming " acquainted with the reſult of our deliberations. " And you will agree with me in the neceſſity of " deceiving them."

But

But men of true courage and honour, muſt hold in deteſtation all treachery and falſhood. The earl of Peterborough, in conjunction with the prince of Darmſtadt, carried on the ſiege of Barcelona, about the beginning of the preſent century. The governor offered to capitulate, and came to a parley with lord Peterborough, at the gates of the city. The articles were not yet ſigned; when ſuddenly loud ſhouts and huzzas were heard in the town. "You have perfidiouſly betrayed us!" ſaid the governor to the earl. "Whilſt we are capitulating, with unſuſpecting ho-"nour and ſincerity, your Engliſh ſoldiers have en-"tered the city by the ramparts; and are now com-"mitting rapine, murder, and every kind of "violence." "You do injuſtice to the Engliſh," replied the general: "This treachery is chargeable "only on the troops of Darmſtadt. But permit me "to enter into the town with my ſoldiers, and I will "inſtantly repreſs the outrage, and return to the "gate to finiſh the capitulation."

The offer was made with an air of truth, and ſincerity; and accepted with a generous confidence. Peterborough haſtened into the ſtreets, where he found the Germans and Catalans pillaging the houſes of the principal inhabitants. He drove them away; and obliged them to leave the booty, which they were carrying off: And, after having quieted all diſturbances, he rejoined the governor, and compleated the capitulation, without demanding any

new, or more advantageous terms. The Spaniards were aſtoniſhed at the magnanimity of the Engliſh, whom they had generally regarded before as faithleſs barbarians.*

Sophron remarked, that the glory, on this occaſion, appeared to belong chiefly to lord Peterborough, as an individual. But I recollect, continued he, a tranſaction in the Grecian hiſtory, which ſeems to evince an equal ſenſe of honour, and deteſtation of perfidy, in the whole body of the Athenians. Theſe people were inflamed with the ambition of governing Greece; and Themiſtocles, a favourite general, exerted all his talents to accompliſh the deſign. One day he aſſembled the citizens of Athens, and informed them, he had a moſt important plan to propoſe; but that he could not communicate it to them, becauſe the ſucceſs of it depended upon ſecrecy. He therefore requeſted them to appoint a confidential perſon, to whom he might explain his views, and whoſe approbation of them might have the force of public authority. Ariſtides was unanimouſly choſen; and Themiſtocles laid open to him the project, which he had conceived, of burning the whole fleet of the Grecian ſtates, then lying unguarded in a neighbouring port; the deſtruction of which, he ſaid, could not fail to ſecure the dominion

* See Voltaire's Siecle de Louis XIV.

of

of Athens. Ariſtides returned to the aſſembly, and declared, that the project of Themiſtocles promiſed the greateſt benefit to the commonwealth; but that it was perfidious and unjuſt. The people inſtantly, and with one voice, rejected the propoſal. But the Athenians were ſoon afterwards corrupted by proſperity: And Thucydides informs us, it became, with them, a maxim of ſtate, "that nothing is diſhonourable, which is advantageous." *

Here I could not forbear to mention a noble, and long-continued exertion of public faith and commercial honour, though it was a ſlight digreſſion from the topic of diſcourſe. The Spaniſh galeons deſtined to ſupply Tierra Firma, and the kingdoms of Peru and Chili, with almoſt every article of neceſſary conſumption, touch firſt at Carthagena, and then at Porto-Bello. In the latter place a fair is opened; the wealth of America is exchanged for the manufactures of Europe; and during its preſcribed term of forty days, the richeſt traffic on the face of the earth is begun and finiſhed, with unbounded confidence, and the utmoſt ſimplicity of tranſaction. No bale of goods is ever opened, no cheſt of treaſure is examined. Both are received on the credit of the perſons to whom they belong; and only one inſtance of fraud is recorded, during the long period in which trade was carried on with this liberal

* Thucydid. Lib. VI.

confidence. All the coined ſilver which was brought from Peru to Porto-Bello in the year 1654, was found to be adulterated, and to be mingled with a fifth part of baſe metal. The Spaniſh merchants, with their uſual integrity, ſuſtained the whole loſs, and indemnified the foreigners by whom they were employed. The fraud was detected; and the treaſurer of the revenue in Peru, the author of it, was publicly burnt.*

Are we not every day guilty of lying, purſued Philocles, in the common forms of civility; and in various modes of ſpeech, which cuſtom has introduced?

Surely not, replied Sophron; for if theſe be well underſtood, no one is deceived by them.

I do not entirely accord with you, Sophron, ſaid I; and I believe it will not be eaſy to juſtify, upon the principles either of wiſdom or ſtrict morality, many complimental expreſſions uſed in converſation. You remember the letter of the ambaſſador from Bantam, which is inſerted in one of the volumes of the Spectator. This honeſt ſtranger informs his maſter, that the people of England call him and his ſubjects barbarians, becauſe they ſpeak the truth; and account themſelves polite and civilized, becauſe they ſay one thing, and mean another. "On my firſt land-

* Robertſon's Hiſt. of America, Vol. II. Note 93. B. VIII.

ing,"

ing," ſays he, "one told me that he ſhould be glad "to do me any ſervice in his power. I deſired him "therefore to carry my portmanteau; but inſtead of "ſerving me according to his promiſe, he laughed, "and ordered another to do it. I lodged the firſt "week at the houſe of a perſon, who intreated me "to think myſelf at home, and to conſider his houſe "as my own. Accordingly, the next morning I be-"gan to knock down one of the walls, in order to "let in the freſh air; and packed up ſome of the "houſhold goods, of which I intended to make thee "a preſent. But the falſe varlet ſoon ſent me word, "that he would have no ſuch doings in his houſe." Perhaps, however, I may incur the charge of falſhood, by quoting the letter of an ambaſſador, who never exiſted.

Such fictions, Philocles remarked, partake not of the nature of lies. They are intended to convey amuſement or inſtruction, not to ſerve the purpoſes of deceit.

Nor is the caſe eſſentially different with reſpect to the common forms of civility. Their import is known to all who uſe them; and as they are expreſſive of urbanity and benevolence, they tend, under proper reſtrictions, to ſoften the aſperities, and heighten the pleaſures of ſocial intercourſe. Genuine courteſy has, indeed, its ſeat in the heart; and implies the deſire of gratifying others, in the ſubordinate offices

of life, by the ſacrifice of our own eaſe or intereſt. It is eſſential, therefore, to every amiable character; and can only diſplay itſelf in ſuch appropriated modes as cuſtom has eſtabliſhed in different countries, or amongſt different ranks of men. But, when the *ſubſtance* is wanting, ſome benefit is derived to the world even from its *forms*: And to the ruſtic, who claims the privilege of ſpeaking blunt truths, or of acting with rude and malicious ſincerity, we may juſtly addreſs the words of Hamlet to the Queen:

"Aſſume a virtue, if you have it not!"

On this account, I cannot but condemn the affected ſeverity of Paulinus biſhop of Nola, who reproves his correſpondent Sulpicius Severus, for having ſubſcribed himſelf his ſervant. "Beware," ſays this primitive writer, "thou ſubſcribe not thyſelf HIS SERVANT, "who is thy BROTHER; for flattery is ſinful; and "it is not a teſtimony of humility, to give thoſe "honours to men, which are only due to the One "Lord, Maſter, and God." * We find the patriarch Abraham actuated by no ſuch ſcruples, though he lived in the period of paſtoral ſimplicity, and was highly diſtinguiſhed for his virtue and integrity. "*And he lift up his eyes, and looked; and lo, three* "*men ſtood by him: And when he ſaw them, he ran* "*to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himſelf* "*toward the ground; and ſaid, My lord, if now I*

* See Barclay's Apology, p. 525.

"*have*

" *have found favour in thy ſight, paſs not away, I* " *pray thee, from thy ſervant.*" *

Lot, alſo, is repreſented, in the book of Geneſis, as accoſting, in ſimilar terms, two ſtrangers, with whoſe dignity he was then unacquainted. " *And he* " *ſaid, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you,* " *into your ſervant's houſe, and tarry all night, and* " *waſh your feet*; *and ye ſhall riſe up early, and go on* " *your ways.*" †

The conduct and expreſſions of theſe venerable patriarchs, might, I obſerved, be perfectly conſiſtent with the niceſt adherence to truth and ſincerity. For though they ſtiled themſelves the *ſervants* of the ſtrangers, whom they addreſſed, they could not mean to extend the term beyond ſuch *ſervices* as the laws of hoſpitality required.

Similar laws, anſwered Philocles, which general conſent has eſtabliſhed, bind every man, in the common intercourſe of life, to reſtrain his angry paſſions, to ſilence his ſevere judgments, to ſuppreſs his pride and arrogance, and not only to correct whatever is offenſive in his manners, but to ſhew that urbanity of ſpirit, which, by its benevolent attentions, contributes to alleviate miſery, and to increaſe the ſum of

* Geneſis, Chap. XVIII. Ver. 2, 3.

† Ib. Chap. XIX. Ver. 2.

public happineſs and order. Miſtake me not, however, by ſuppoſing that I would recommend forward profeſſions, a fawning demeanour, or unlimited complaiſance. Integrity of heart, and ſteadineſs of principle, forbid all ſinful conformity with the world: And I would neither flatter folly, countenance vice, nor yield up one important duty to artificial politeneſs. But the ſacrifice of my own pride, reſentment, caprice, or ill nature, to ſocial eaſe and enjoyment, may often be required: And he, who, like Diogenes, neither poſſeſſes the ſubſtance, nor the form of courteſy, ſhould be baniſhed from the world. This Cynic, you remember, when he paid a viſit to Plato, who united a taſte for elegance with the love of philoſophy, exulted in the rudeneſs of reproof, and bedaubing with his dirty feet the fine carpet, which covered the floor, he cried out, "Thus I trample on the pride of Plato." "But with far greater pride," retorted Plato, with a ſarcaſtic ſeverity, which the occaſion fully juſtified. Lord Bacon mentions two noblemen of his acquaintance; one of whom kept a very magnificent table, but treated his gueſts with illiberal freedom. The other, when he entertained the ſame gueſts, probably with humbler cheer, but more politeneſs, uſed to aſk them, "Tell truly, was there never a flout or dry blow given at my lord's table?" To which the gueſts anſwered, "Such and ſuch a thing paſſed." "I thought," ſaid this nobleman, "he would mar a good dinner." *

* Bacon's Eſſays, XXXII.

Urbanity

Urbanity has been admirably characteriſed, by a celebrated writer, under the appellation of GENTLENESS. "This virtue," he obſerves, "is founded "on a ſenſe of what we owe to Him who made us, "and to the common nature of which we all ſhare. "It ariſes from reflection on our own failures and "wants; and from juſt views of the condition and "the duty of man. It is native feeling, heightened, "and improved by principle. It is the heart, which "eaſily relents; which feels for every thing that is "human; and is backward and ſlow to inflict the "leaſt wound. It is affable in its addreſs, and mild "in its demeanour; ever ready to oblige, and willing to be obliged by others; breathing habitual "kindneſs towards friends, courteſy to ſtrangers, "long ſuffering to enemies. It exerciſes authority "with moderation; adminiſters reproof with tenderneſs; confers favours with eaſe and modeſty. "It is unaſſuming in opinion, and temperate in zeal. "It contends not eagerly about trifles; ſlow to contradict, and ſtill ſlower to blame; but prompt to "allay diſſention, and to reſtore peace. It neither "intermeddles unneceſſarily with the affairs, nor "pries inquiſitively into the ſecrets, of others. It "delights above all things to alleviate diſtreſs, and, "if it cannot dry up the falling tear, to ſooth at leaſt "the grieving heart. Where it has not the power "of being uſeful, it is never burdenſome. It ſeeks "to pleaſe, rather than to ſhine and dazzle; and "conceals with care that ſuperiority, either of talents

or

"or of rank, which is oppreſſive to thoſe who are "beneath it. In a word, it is that ſpirit, and that "tenour of manners, which the Goſpel of Chriſt en- "joins, when it commands us *to bear one another's bur-* "*dens; to rejoice with thoſe who rejoice, and to weep* "*with thoſe who weep; to pleaſe every one his neigh-* "*bour for his good; to be kind and tender-hearted; to* "*be pitiful and courteous; to ſupport the weak, and* "*to be patient towards all men.*" *

Sophron appeared to be much impreſſed with this animated and ſtriking picture of courteſy; but he ſuggeſted to Philocles, that amongſt the inferior offices of ſocial life, he had not noticed the duties of counſel and reproof. Theſe, ſaid he, I fear, cannot be adminiſtered by a mind under the influence of gentleneſs, without the concealment, and ſometimes, even the violation of truth.

The former part of your allegation, replied Philocles, may perhaps be granted; but the latter I cannot admit. Advice and reprehenſion require, indeed, the utmoſt delicacy; and painful truths ſhould be delivered in the ſofteſt terms, and expreſſed no farther, than is neceſſary to produce their due effect. A courteous man will alſo mix what is conciliating, with what is offenſive; praiſe, with cenſure; deference and reſpect, with the authority of admo-

* Blair's Sermons, Vol. I. p. 150.

nition,

nition, ſo far as theſe can be done in conſiſtence with probity and honour. For the mind revolts againſt all cenſorian power, which diſplays pride or pleaſure in finding fault; and is wounded by the bare ſuſpicion of ſuch diſgraceful tyranny. But advice, diveſted of the harſhneſs, and yet retaining the honeſt warmth of truth, "is like honey, put round the brim of a veſſel full of wormwood." * Even this vehicle, however, is ſometimes inſufficient to conceal the draught of bitterneſs; of which we are furniſhed with an admirable and diverting inſtance in the hiſtory of Gil Blas. This young man became the favourite of the archbiſhop of Grenada; in whoſe family he enjoyed a lucrative and agreeable office; and future proſpects of much higher preferment. The archbiſhop regarded him as a perſon of taſte and ſentiment; and one day entered into the following converſation with him. "Liſten, with attention, to what I am going "to deliver. My chief pleaſure conſiſts in preach-"ing; the Lord gives a bleſſing to my homilies; "they touch the hearts of ſinners; make them ſe-"rioufly reflect on their conduct, and have recourſe "to inſtant repentance. This ſucceſs ſhould alone "be a ſufficient incitement to my ſtudies: Neverthe-"leſs, I will confeſs to thee my weakneſs, and ac-"knowledge, that I propoſe to myſelf another re-"ward; a reward, with which the delicacy of my "nature reproaches me in vain. The honour of being

* Memoirs of Brandenburgh, by the King of Pruſſia.

"reckoned

" reckoned a perfect orator, has charmed my imagi-
" nation: My performances are thought equally
" nervous and refined; but I am anxious to avoid
" the misfortune of those who write too long; and
" I wish to retire without forfeiting one tittle of my
" reputation. Wherefore, my dear Gil Blas, what
" I exact of thy zeal, is, that whenever thou shalt
" perceive a failure in my genius, or the least mark
" of the imbecility of old age in my compositions,
" that thou wilt immediately advertise me of it.
" I dare not trust to my own judgment, which may
" be seduced by self-love; but make choice of thine,
" because I know it to be good, and am resolved to
" stand by thy decision."

Sometime after this discourse, the prelate was seized with a fit of apoplexy. He was, however, soon relieved; and such salutary medicines were administered, that his health seemed to be re-established. But his understanding suffered a severe shock, which was plainly perceptible in the first homily that he composed. The succeeding one proved perfectly decisive; as it abounded in repetitions, vain arguments, and false pathos. " Now," said Gil Blas to himself, " master homily critic, prepare to exercise the office, " which you have undertaken. You see that the " faculties of his grace begin to fail. It is your " duty to give him notice of it, not only as the de-" pository of his thoughts, but likewise lest you " should be anticipated by some other of his friends."

But

But the embarraſſment was, how to convey the mortifying intimation to his patron. Fortunately, the archbiſhop extricated him from the difficulty, by inquiring, what people ſaid of him, and if they were ſatisfied with his laſt diſcourſe. Gil Blas anſwered, that the homily had not ſucceeded ſo well as the others, in affecting the audience. "How," replied the prelate, with aſtoniſhment, "has it met with any Ariſtarchus?" "No, ſir," ſaid Gil Blas, "by no "means; But ſince you have laid your injunctions "upon me to be open and ſincere, I will take the "liberty of telling you, that your late diſcourſe, in "my judgment, has not altogether the energy of "your prior performances." The archbiſhop grew pale at theſe words; and ſaid, with a forced ſmile, "So then, Mr. Gil Blas, this piece is not to your "taſte? You think my underſtanding enfeebled, "don't you?" "I ſhould not have ſpoken ſo freely," anſwered Gil Blas, "if your grace had not "commanded me. I do no more, therefore, than "obey you; and I moſt humbly beg that you will "not be offended at my freedom." "God forbid," cried the prelate, with precipitation; "God forbid, "that I ſhould find fault with it. This would be "extremely unjuſt. I am not angry, that you ſpeak "your ſentiments: it is the ſentiment only that I "condemn. Know, that I never compoſed a better "homily, than that, which you diſapprove; for my "genius, thank Heaven, hath yet loſt nothing of its "vigour. Henceforth, however, I will chuſe an

"abler

" abler confidant than you are. Go," added he, puſhing Gil Blas out of his cloſet, by the ſhoulders; " go, tell my treaſurer to give you a hundred ducats. " I wiſh you all manner of proſperity, with a little " more taſte." *

But we have enlarged ſufficiently on this part of our ſubject. Permit me, therefore, Sophron, to proceed, by inquiring, whether ſecrecy, in certain caſes, be not a branch of faithfulneſs, or veracity?

It is a very important one, anſwered Sophron. To betray the confidence that is repoſed in us, whether we have tacitly, or by a promiſe, bound ourſelves to fidelity, evinces a weak underſtanding, or a bad heart. Levity, an eagerneſs to communicate, or the deſire of ſeeming to be important, are the moſt frequent cauſes of the breach of ſecrecy; but it is to be feared, that it ſometimes originates from baſeneſs and malevolence.

This offence was deemed infamous by the ancient Perſians. For it was their opinion, ſays Quintus Curtius, that however deficient a man might be in the talents, requiſite to the attainment of excellency; the negative virtues were, at leaſt, in his power; and that he might be ſilent, although he could not be eloquent.

* Gil Blas, Vol. III.

Here

Here Philocles judiciouſly remarked, that the laws of ſecrecy are not, in all caſes, to be regarded as inviolable; for we are under antecedent obligations, of a nature ſtill more forcible and binding. If any atrocious deſign, either againſt an individual or the ſtate, be communicated in confidence to us, it is our duty to diſſuade the party, if poſſible, from the execution of it. But ſhould our endeavours appear to be unavailing, the concealment of what we know, might involve us in the guilt of the offence; and we ſhould be juſtly puniſhable, as acceſſaries to the crime. At Florence, and in other ſtates of Italy, a man appriſed of a plot againſt the government, is put to death for not revealing it.* In England, *miſpriſion* of *treaſon* is puniſhed by forfeiture of rents, and of goods, and by impriſonment during life: And *miſpriſion* of *felony*, by impriſonment for a diſcretionary term, and by fine and ranſom, at the pleaſure of the king's judges. †

If ſuch *miſpriſions* be really culpable, how comes it to paſs, I aſked, that informers are almoſt univerſally held in contempt and deteſtation?

Becauſe few villains, ſaid Philocles, will communicate their wicked deſigns to any but thoſe, whom they believe inclined to participate in the commiſſion

* Guiccardini's Hiſt.

† Blackſtone's Commentaries.

of

of them. Hence there is generally a preſumption of previous guilt in the informer: And to this guilt, we ſuperadd that of baſeneſs and perfidy; as we are not willing to ſuppoſe that he is influenced to perform this public act, either by motives of private virtue, or of patriotiſm. However, we ſhould be careful not to carry our prepoſſeſſion againſt informers, even of this claſs, too far. They do eſſential ſervice to the community; and may, perhaps, think this ſervice the beſt atonement for their paſt guilt, and the fulleſt proof of their preſent repentance.

There is another branch of faithfulneſs, which it is alſo diſhonourable to violate; and which lays us under an obligation to avoid tattling, tale-bearing, and cenſoriouſneſs. In the unguarded hours of ſocial intercourſe, and ſtill more in the commerce of domeſtic life, the wiſeſt and the beſt of men ſpeak their thoughts without reſerve; and caſting off all reſtraint, may ſometimes deviate, both in their words and actions, from the rules of ſtrict propriety. To relate ſuch inadvertencies, is meanneſs; to ridicule them, is ill nature; and to exaggerate them, is calumny.*

* *Abſentem qui rodit Amicum,*
Qui non defendit, alio culpante, ſolutos
Qui captat riſus hominum, famamque dicacis,
Fingere qui non viſa poteſt, commiſſa tacere
Qui nequit; hic Niger eſt; hunc tu, Romane, caveto.

Hor. Lib. 1. Sat. 4.

Sophron

Sophron now turned our attention to a moſt important branch of moral Truth, by inquiring whether INSINCERITY in RELIGION may not be deemed a highly criminal ſpecies of lying?

Certainly it may, returned Philocles. GOD is a being of ſpotleſs purity, who ſearches the heart, and commands us to worſhip him "*in ſpirit and in truth.*" "*Lying lips,*" whether employed in falſe profeſſions of faith or of piety, "*are an abomination to the Lord.*" And he who can, habitually, practiſe inſincerity and hypocriſy, in thoſe ſerious and important tranſactions with his Creator, Benefactor, and Judge, which have eternity for their object, is not likely to pay any ſteady regard to temporary intereſts, reſulting from the laws of ſociety, or the ordinary obligations of morality. When one of the kings of France ſolicited M. Bougier, who was a proteſtant, to conform to the Roman Catholic religion, promiſing him, in return, a commiſſion or a government, "Sire," replied he, "if I could be perſuaded "to betray my God for a marſhal's ſtaff, I might be "induced to betray my king for a bribe of much leſs "value."

It was a noble reply! cried Sophron, with ingenuous warmth; and the recital of it brings to my memory a ſtory, which the duke of Sully has recorded of Ambroſe Parè, a zealous Huguenot, and ſurgeon to Charles the Ninth of France. He was with the

king, during the time of the maſſacre of Paris, when ſo many thouſand innocent and virtuous perſons were inhumanly butchered in cold blood; and was perhaps a witneſs of the monarch's firing with a carabine, upon the wretched Calviniſts, who fled from their murderers by the windows of the palace. The courtiers, as they came into the royal preſence, vied with each other, in boaſting of the barbarities which they had committed; and Charles ſaid to Parè, whoſe religious opinions he well knew, "The time is now "come, when I ſhall have none but catholics in my "dominions." "Sire," anſwered he, without embarraſſment or perturbation, "can you forget "your promiſe to me, that I ſhould never be obliged "to go to maſs!" The duke of Sully ſeems to be of opinion, that the edict, which Charles iſſued the ſucceeding day, to prohibit the continuance of the maſſacre, was partly owing to the intrepidity and influence of Parè.

The conduct of Parè, ſaid Philocles, on ſo trying an occaſion, affords a ſtriking proof of firmneſs and ſincerity, in the profeſſion of religious faith. But examples, of much higher degrees of ſimilar fidelity, are to be found in the earlier annals of the Chriſtian church. Nor are inſtances wanting, even in the heathen world, of a zealous and fearleſs attachment to thoſe rites, which ignorance deemed ſacred, and which individuals or bodies of men bound themſelves, by ſolemn engagements, to perform.

When

When the Gauls were become maſters of Rome, they beſieged the capitol, and cloſely guarded every avenue, to prevent the eſcape of a ſingle Roman citizen. Under theſe circumſtances of danger, Caius Fabius Dorſo, a young man of an illuſtrious family, deſcended from the capitol, bearing certain holy utenſils in his hands; and paſſed through the midſt of the enemy, regardleſs of their menaces, to offer a ſacrifice to the gods on the hill Quirinalis. This ſacrifice, it was the cuſtom of his anceſtors to perform yearly, on a ſtated day; and when he had finiſhed the ſolemnity, the Gauls, though a fierce and barbarous people, ſuffered him to return unmoleſted, admiring his piety, and aſtoniſhed at his intrepidity.* Facts, like theſe, ſhould make us bluſh at indifference, and abhor diſſimulation in religion. But whilſt we allow ſuch impreſſions to produce their full influence on our hearts, let us beware of paſſing judgment upon others, with raſhneſs or unchriſtian ſeverity. Intemperate zeal is apt to beget a malignancy of ſpirit, no leſs incompatible with the love of GOD, than with benevolence to man. The conviction of the mind, in matters of faith, often depends more upon education and authority, than on the exertions of reaſon: And if we ſee men profeſſing to believe, what is unintelligible or abſurd, we ſhould be well aſſured that they have not deceived

* Vid. Liv. Hiſt.

themſelves, before we accuſe them of mocking their Creator, and impoſing on the world.

We may pity ignorance, and lament credulity; but hypocriſy, urged Sophron, merits from us no indulgence: And this ſpecies of falſhood is ſo characteriſtically marked, that it cannot be miſtaken. Who, that obſerves a man ſanctified in his behaviour, and aſſiduous in his public devotions, whilſt he is at the ſame time ſelfiſh, malevolent, bigoted, and oppreſſive, will heſitate to charge him with the groſſeſt and moſt infamous diſſimulation?

If there be ſufficient proof, that this is really his temper of mind, I acknowledge, ſaid Philocles, that you may and ought to brand him with the name of hypocrite. But no man ſhould be charged with a crime univerſally odious, on ſlight or equivocal evidence. There is a ſpecies of devotion, which, having its ſeat chiefly in the imagination and the paſſions, bears no exact proportion to the virtue of the character in which it is found: And charity, together with a humble ſenſe of our own infirmities, will always lead us to put the moſt favourable conſtruction on the conduct of our fellow creatures. We ſhould remember alſo, that enthuſiaſm and ſuperſtition have often appeared, with the external marks of diſſimulation. The famous lord Herbert, of Cherbury, had written an elaborate work againſt Chriſtianity, which he intitled, *De Veritate, prout diſtinguitur*

diſtinguitur à Revelatione. But knowing that it would meet with much oppoſition, he remained ſome time in anxious ſuſpence about the publication of it. Providence, however, as he informs us, kindly interpoſed, and determined his wavering reſolutions. Hear the marvellous tale, which he relates!

"Being thus doubtful in my chamber, one fair "day in the ſummer, my caſement being opened "towards the ſouth, the ſun ſhining clear, and no "wind ſtirring, I took my book *De Veritate* in my "hand, and kneeling on my knees, devoutly ſaid, "*O thou eternal God, I am not ſatisfied enough, whether* "*I ſhall publiſh this book; if it be for thy glory, I be-* "*ſeech thee give me ſome ſign from heaven; if not, I* "*ſhall ſuppreſs it.* I had no ſooner ſpoken theſe "words, but a loud, though yet gentle noiſe, came "from the heavens, which did ſo comfort and chear "me, that I took my petition as granted, and that I "had the ſign I demanded; whereupon alſo I re-"ſolved to print my book." *

It muſt appear ſtrange, that a man, who had ſpent a conſiderable part of his life in courts and camps, ſhould poſſeſs ſuch a deluded imagination. And this deluſion will be ſtill more ſuſpicious, when you are told, that Lord Herbert's chief argument againſt

* See the Life of Lord Herbert, written by himſelf.

Chriſtianity is, the improbability that Heaven ſhould reveal its laws only to a portion of the earth. For how could he, who doubted of a *partial*, believe an *individual* revelation? Or is it poſſible, that he could have the vanity to think his book of ſuch importance, as to extort a declaration of the Divine will, when the intereſt and happineſs of a fourth part of mankind, were deemed, by him, objects inadequate to the like diſplay of goodneſs? * Do theſe arguments convince you of Lord Herbert's hypocriſy? Your concluſion is haſty, and unjuſt. Read his Life, and you will be ſatisfied, that the warmth of his temper might expoſe him to ſelf-deception; but that he was incapable of obtruding on the world, what he knew to be a falſhood. †

Sophron

* See Walpole's Cat. of Royal and Noble Authors.

† The hiſtory of this romantic nobleman, exemplifies the folly and danger of adopting falſe maxims of morality. From the variety of inſtances which offer themſelves, I ſhall ſelect one, which might have been introduced, perhaps with more propriety, in a preceding page.

During lord Herbert's abode at the duke of Montmorency's, about twenty-four miles from Paris, it happened, one evening, that a daughter of the dutcheſs de Ventadour, of about ten or eleven years of age, went to walk in the meadows with his lordſhip, and ſeveral other gentlemen and ladies. The young lady wore a knot of ribband on her head, which a French chevalier ſnatched away, and faſtened to his hatband. He was deſired to return it, but refuſed.

The

Sophron modeſtly acknowledged, that the ſigns of religious diſſimulation might be leſs deciſive, than he had ſuppoſed. But allow me, ſaid he, to contraſt your inſtance of lord Herbert, with two facts concerning Oliver Cromwell; to ſhew that the charge of hypocriſy may be juſtly grounded on ſingle actions, without taking into our view the whole tenour of a man's life. Suppoſe a ſtranger, ignorant of the craftineſs and ambition of Cromwell, to have

The lady then requeſted lord Herbert to recover it for her. A race enſued; and the chevalier, finding himſelf likely to be overtaken, made a ſudden turn, and was about to deliver his prize to the young lady, when lord Herbert ſeized his arm, and cried out, "I give it you." "Pardon me," ſaid the lady, "it is he who gives it me." "Madam," replied lord Herbert, "I will not contradict you; but "if the chevalier do not acknowledge, that I conſtrain him to give "the ribband, I will fight with him." And the next day he ſen him a challenge, "being bound thereunto," ſays he, "by the oath taken when I was made knight of the bath."

He relates, alſo, three other ſimilar caſes, to ſhew *how ſtrictly he held himſelf to his oath of knighthood.* "This oath," ſays the ingenious editor of lord Herbert's Life, "is one remnant of a ſuperſti- "tious and romantic age, which an age, calling itſelf enlightened, "ſtill retains. The ſolemn ſervice at the inveſtiture of the knights, "which has not the leaſt connection with any thing holy, is a piece "of the ſame profane pageantry. The oath being no longer ſup- "poſed to bind, it is ſtrange mockery to invoke Heaven on ſo "trifling an occaſion." It would be more ſtrange, if every knight, like the conſcientious lord Herbert, ſhould think himſelf bound to cut a man's throat, whenever a miſs loſes her top-knot!

been preſent in the long parliament, when the ordinance for the trial of Charles I. was read and aſſented to; would he have heſitated to think him an hypocrite, after hearing him deliver the following words? "Should any one have voluntarily propoſed to bring "the king to puniſhment, I ſhould have regarded "him as the greateſt traitor; but ſince Providence "and neceſſity have caſt us upon it, I will pray to "GOD for a bleſſing on your councils; though I "am not prepared to give you my advice on this "important occaſion. Even I myſelf, when I was "lately offering up a petition for his majeſty's re-"ſtoration, felt my tongue cleave to the roof of my "mouth; and conſidered this ſupernatural move-"ment, as the anſwer which Heaven, having re-"jected the king, had ſent to my ſupplications." *

Let us further ſuppoſe, that this ſtranger attended the high court of juſtice, and ſaw Cromwell, when he took the pen in his hand, to ſign the warrant for the king's execution, jocularly bedaub the face of his neighbour with the ink; could he forbear to expreſs his diſguſt at the levity which he then obſerved; and his abhorrence of the groſs diſſimulation, to which he had been before a witneſs?

You have drawn your example, replied Philocles, from that diſtracted period of our hiſtory, when truth

* Whitlock.

appears

appears to have been baniſhed from public life. The deſpotic views of a monarch, who was under the influence of a popiſh queen, a bigoted prelate, and a corrupt ſtateſman, led him to the practice of deceit and falſhood; * and the parties, who united in oppoſing his encroachments on the civil and religious rights

* Conſult Clarendon, Vol. I. p. 22. Ruſhworth, Vol. I. from p. 119 to 127. Hume's Hiſt. 4to. Vol. I. p. 103. Ed. 1754. "He had promiſed to the laſt houſe of commons a redreſs of this "religious grievance; but he was too apt, in imitation of his fa-"ther, to conſider theſe promiſes as temporary expedients, which "after the diſſolution of the parliament, he was not any farther to "regard." Id. p. 156. See alſo the Life of the Lord Keeper Williams, p. 143. Whitlock, p. 10. The Petition of Rights. Harris's Hiſt. Sidney's State Papers, Vol. II. p. 665, &c. Rapin ſays, "Charles made frequent uſe of mental reſervations, concealed "in ambiguous terms, and general expreſſions, of which he reſerved "the explication to a proper time and place. For this reaſon, the "parliament could never confide in his promiſes, wherein there was "always either ſome ambiguous term, or ſome reſtriction that ren-"dered them uſeleſs. This may be ſaid to be one of the principal "cauſes of his ruin; becauſe giving thereby occaſion of diſtruſt, it "was not poſſible to find any expedient for a peace with the parlia-"ment. He was thought to act with ſo little ſincerity in his en-"gagements, that it was believed there was no dependence on his "word. The parliament could not even reſolve to debate on the "king's propoſitions, ſo convinced were they of his ability to hide "his real intentions, under ambiguous expreſſions." Rapin's Hiſt. Vol. II. p. 570. The following paſſage is taken from the works of an hiſtorian, who is acknowledged to have been very partial to king Charles. "*Malè poſita eſt lex, quæ tumultuariè poſita eſt*, was one "of

rights of the people, ſoon deviated from their original principles; and availing themſelves of the gloomy enthuſiaſm of the times, concealed their perfidy and ambition, under the maſk of pious zeal, and divine

" of thoſe poſitions of Ariſtotle," ſays he, " which hath never ſince " been contradicted; and was an advantage, that, being well ma- " naged, and ſtoutly inſiſted upon, would, in ſpite of all their ma- " chinations, which were not yet firmly and ſolidly formed, have " brought them to a temper of being treated with. But I have " ſome cauſe to believe, that even this argument, which was un- " anſwerable for the rejecting that bill, was applied for the con- " firming it; and an opinion that the violence and force, uſed in " procuring it, rendered it abſolutely invalid and void, made the " confirmation of it leſs conſidered, as not being of ſtrength to " make that act good, which was in itſelf null. And I doubt this " logic had an influence upon other acts of leſs moment." Clarendon's Hiſt. Vol. II. p. 30. Rapin makes the following obſervation on this paſſage. " Let the reader judge after this, if we may " boaſt of king Charles's ſincerity, ſince even in paſſing acts of par- " liament, which are the moſt authentic and ſolemn promiſes a " king of England can make, he gave his aſſent, merely in an opi- " nion, that they were void in themſelves, and conſequently he was " not bound by this engagement." I have inſerted theſe references and quotations, not merely to authenticate my charge againſt king Charles, but to ſhew, from his unhappy fate, how deluſive, dangerous, and infamous, is the following political obſervation of Machiavel. " It has appeared by experience, that thoſe princes who " have made light of their word, and artfully deceived mankind, " have all along done great things, and have at length got the better " of ſuch as proceeded upon honourable principles."

illumi-

illuminations. That Cromwell was guilty of hypocriſy, may with too much probability be inferred from numerous and undoubted facts. But I know not whether the two, which you have related, would have authoriſed a ſtranger to charge him publicly, with this reproachful offence. Cromwell poſſeſſed a vigorous, active, and enlarged underſtanding; and could aſſume, whenever he pleaſed, that dignity of manners, which befitted his high ſtation. But when he relaxed himſelf from the toils of war, or the cares of government, his amuſements frequently conſiſted in the loweſt buffoonery. Yet in theſe apparently unguarded moments, he was upon the watch to remark the characters, deſigns, and weakneſſes of men; and to penetrate into the inmoſt receſſes of their hearts. Before the trial of Charles, a meeting was held between the chiefs of the republican party and the general officers, to concert the model of the intended new government. After the debates on this moſt intereſting and important ſubject, Ludlow informs us, that Cromwell, by way of frolic, threw a cuſhion at his head; and when Ludlow took up another cuſhion to teturn the joke, the general ran down ſtairs, and was in danger of breaking his bones in the hurry.* It is evident, therefore, that this extraordinary man might really be ſerious, under the appearance of levity. But this topic has engroſſed too much of our attention: And I will only add,

* Hume's Hiſt.

that

that the more we cultivate moral or religious ſincerity in ourſelves, the leſs diſpoſed we ſhall be to ſuſpect the want of it in others.

There is a character, ſaid Sophron, of genuine dignity and importance, not uſurped like that of Cromwell, the luſtre of which has been tarniſhed by the charge of religious diſſimulation. This charge, you know, is laid in the ſtrongeſt terms againſt the apoſtle Peter, by St. Paul himſelf, who writes thus to the Galatians: "*But when Peter came to Antioch, "I withſtood him to the face, becauſe he was to be "blamed. For before that certain came from James, "he did eat with the Gentiles; but when they were "come, he withdrew, and ſeparated himſelf, fearing "them which were of the circumciſion. And the other "Jews diſſembled likewiſe with him; inſomuch that "Barnabas was carried away with their diſſimulation. "But when I ſaw that they walked not uprightly, "according to the Goſpel, I ſaid unto Peter before them "all, If thou, being a Jew, liveſt after the manner "of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compelleſt "thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?*"

The conduct of Peter, on this occaſion, is the more extraordinary, as he appears to have had the fulleſt conviction of the abolition of the Jewiſh ceremonies, by the promulgation of the Goſpel of Chriſt:* A conviction, founded on an immediate

* Acts, Chap. v. Ver. 7, 8.

revelation

revelation from heaven; in conſequence of which he baptized the centurion Cornelius and his family. "*And he ſaid unto them, Ye know how that it is an* "*unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew, to keep* "*company with, or come unto one of another nation;* "*but God hath ſhewed me, that I ſhould not call any* "*man common or unclean: For of a truth I perceive* "*that God is no reſpecter of perſons: But in every* "*nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteouſ-* "*neſs, is accepted with him.*" *

The enemies of Chriſtianity, anſwered Philocles, have indecently and unjuſtly triumphed in this diſpute between the apoſtles: And its friends, with a zeal no leſs heated and erroneous, have anxiouſly ſought to diſavow, or to evade it. Two primitive fathers † of the church, have even repreſented it as a ſtratagem or deceit, concerted privately, for the benefit of the Jewiſh converts: But Auſtin rejects this defence with proper indignation, as diſhonourable to the character of Paul, and inadequate to the juſtification of Peter, whoſe conduct he confeſſes to have been worthy of reprehenſion. The truth, indeed, ſeems to be, that this great apoſtle ſuffered himſelf to be governed, on the unfortunate occaſion now alluded to, as on ſeveral others of his life, by the warmth and impetuoſity of his paſſions. But diſſi-

* Acts, Chap. x.

† Chryſoſtom and Jerom.

mulation

mulation is not the concomitant of ſuch a temper of mind: And as the hiſtory of Peter ſufficiently evinces, that this vice was foreign to his nature, it could originate only, in the preſent inſtance, from the ſudden impreſſion of fear on one, not yet completely diſciplined in the ſchool of fortitude. Let us learn, therefore, Sophron, from the ſeverity of St. Paul's rebuke, to avoid all mean prevarications, or time-ſerving compliances, inconſiſtent with our religious principles; and "*to walk uprightly, according to the* "*truth of the Goſpel; holding faſt the liberty, with* "*which Chriſt has made us free.*"

May we remember alſo, in the judgments which we form, concerning the faith and practices of others, that our great Maſter and Lawgiver has inveſted them with the ſame freedom, which we ourſelves enjoy; and that if an apoſtle was not authoriſed to impoſe a yoke on others, we can have no claim to preſide over conſcience, however erroneous it may be, or to aſſume any power in ſpiritual matters, but what ariſes from the perſuaſive influence of ſuperior reaſon: And even in the exerciſe of this faculty, our language and treatment ſhould be ſuch, as to manifeſt the benignity and gentleneſs of Chriſtian toleration.

I could not hear the term *toleration* from the mouth of Philocles, without expreſſing ſome objections to it, although it has been adopted by Mr. Locke, and other writers of the firſt diſtinction. For words, I obſerved,

obſerved, have a conſiderable influence on opinions; and the preſent term appears to be injurious to that religious liberty, which it is deſigned to import. It implies a *right* to impoſe articles of faith, and modes of worſhip; that non-conformity is a crime; and that the *ſufferance* of it is a matter of favour or lenity. But the non-conformiſt in every country, whether he be a Chriſtian at Conſtantinople, a Proteſtant at Rome, an Epiſcopalian in Scotland, or a Preſbyterian in England, if his rational principles be conſonant to his practice, will regard this claim of *right* as uſurpation, and will urge, that it has neither been conferred by Jeſus Chriſt, nor delegated by the people. Our Saviour expreſsly declares, "*My kingdom is not of this world:*" And his religion was perſecuted and oppreſſed, during the period of its greateſt purity and perfection, and when the miniſters of it had gifts and powers which are now unknown. The people could not delegate ſuch a right to any man, or body of men: For the human mind is ſo mutable, that no individual can fix a ſtandard of his own faith, much leſs can he commiſſion another to eſtabliſh one for him and his poſterity. And this power would in no hands be ſo dangerous, as in thoſe of the ſtateſman or prieſt, who has the folly and preſumption to think himſelf qualified to exerciſe it.

Philocles, by his ſilence, ſeemed to acquieſce in what I had advanced: And when I apologiſed, afterwards, for the interruption, which I had more than once

once occaſioned, to the methodical diſcuſſion of the ſubject in debate, he very politely replied, that the freedom of converſation admits not of a rigid adherence to the preciſe rules of ſyſtem. But were it otherwiſe, ſaid he, the mind is relieved from wearineſs, and animated to more attention, by ſeaſonable digreſſions, if not too long, or too often repeated. That I am not averſe to enter into them myſelf, you may already have obſerved, and will now find, by my recalling to Sophron's memory the diſpute between the apoſtles Paul and Peter; and deducing from it an argument in favour of the truth of Chriſtianity. It is obvious, I think, from this incident, that there was no combination to deceive mankind amongſt the firſt preachers of the Goſpel; and that, if on ordinary occaſions, they were actuated by the common weakneſſes and prejudices of human nature, they neither attempted to conceal, nor to extenuate them. With the ſimplicity of truth, they related facts, as they occurred, whether advantageous or otherwiſe to their characters. And every unprejudiced judge will diſcover, in the records of the Goſpel, ſuch internal marks of fidelity, as no other hiſtory, either of ancient or modern periods, can diſplay. Juſtly, therefore, may we apply to the writings of the Evangeliſts, that maxim of Cicero, "*Quis neſcit primam eſſe hiſtoriæ "legem, ne quid falſi dicere audeat; deinde, ne quid "veri, non audeat?*" *

* *Cicero de Oratore*, Lib. II.

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—— A pauſe enſued; and the converſation ſeemed to be concluded. But Sophron taking up Locke's Eſſay on the Human Underſtanding, which happened to lie on the table before him, read the diſtinction which that author makes, between moral and metaphyſical truth. This ſuggeſted freſh matter of diſcuſſion, and gave riſe to a variety of obſervations, on the danger of error, and on the conduct of reaſon in our intellectual purſuits. Philocles particularly enlarged on the pernicious conſequences of ſupporting FALSE OPINIONS, for the ſake of argument, in public or private diſputations; and repreſented this practice as one great ſource of ſcepticiſm and infidelity, amongſt literary men. The imagination, ſaid he, is ſtruck with novelty; it appears honourable to ſhake off the fetters of vulgar prejudice; and pride is doubly gratified, by the humiliation of an opponent, and the triumph over authority. Thus the paſſions become engaged, on the ſide which the ſceptic eſpouſes; ſophiſtry is miſtaken for ſound logic; he becomes enamoured of diſcoveries, made by his ſuperior penetration; and the ſingularity of his notions, or principles, which would create doubt and heſitation in a wiſe man, tends only to ſtrengthen his conviction of their certainty. Milton, deſcribing the character of Belial, one of the fallen angels, ſays in emphatic language,

---------- "His tongue
"Dropt manna, and could make the worſe appear

" The better reaſon, to perplex and daſh
" Matureſt counſels." *

Does not the philoſopher's maxim, ſaid Sophron, " *Nullius jurare in verba magiſtri,*" ſeem to recommend a ſtrict ſcrutiny into every ſubject? And what more judicious method can be deviſed, of correcting our prejudices, in favour of any eſtabliſhed opinion, than by ſetting ourſelves, boldly, in oppoſition to it?

Would you free yourſelf, Sophron, from a trifling malady, by incurring a ſevere and dangerous one; then, urged Philocles, you may correct a ſlight prejudice, by adopting another that is greater! In our inquiries into truth, we ought to diveſt ourſelves, as much as poſſible, of every prepoſſeſſion. But it is ſurely a reaſonable deference, to the judgment of the public, concerning any doctrine or opinion, that we ſhould firſt examine, with attention, the arguments in its favour, before we admit the objections which may be raiſed againſt it. And by this method the mind will be leaſt unfairly biaſſed in her deciſions; and will reſt on them, with a degree of confidence and ſatisfaction, which can never reſult from partial or prejudiced inveſtigation. Young men of lively parts and acute underſtandings, when they enter upon the field of controverſy, are ſometimes ſo proud of their po-

* Paradiſe Loſt, Book II. L. 112.

lemic

lemic ſkill, as to engage, indiſcriminately, on any ſide of the queſtion in debate. This is a dangerous practice, and cenſured even by Socrates himſelf; whoſe labours were devoted to the diſcuſſion of truth, and the detection of error. "If thou continueſt to take delight in idle argumentation," ſaid he to Euclides, "thou mayeſt be qualified to combat with "the ſophiſts, but wilt never know how to live with "men." And lord Bacon, the great luminary of ſcience, appears to have entertained ſimilar ideas: For, ſpeaking of the logic of Ariſtotle, he terms it, "a philoſophy for contention only; but barren in the production of works, for the benefit of life." * Many lamentable proofs have I ſeen, of the tendency of this habit of altercation to create indifference, not only to intellectual, but alſo to moral and religious truth. Cato, the cenſor, propheſied the ruin of the Roman conſtitution, whenever this ſort of learning ſhould become the faſhionable ſtudy of his countrymen. He conceived his diſlike to it on the following occaſion. "In the year of Rome 599, the Athenians "ſent three of their principal philoſophers, on an "embaſſy to the republic. At the head of theſe was "Carneades, a very celebrated leader of the Academic "ſect. While he was waiting for an anſwer from "the ſenate, he employed himſelf in diſplaying his "talents in the art of diſputation: And the Roman

* Biog. Brit. Vol. I. 2d Edit. p. 449.

" youth flocked round him, in great numbers. In " one of theſe public diſcourſes he attempted to prove, " that *juſtice, and injuſtice, depend altogether on the in-* " *ſtitutions of civil ſociety, and have no foundation in* " *nature.* The next day, agreeably to the manner of " that ſect, and in order to ſet the arguments on each " ſide of the queſtion in full view, he ſupported with " equal eloquence, the reverſe of his former propoſi- " tion. Cato was preſent at both theſe diſputations; " and being apprehenſive that the moral principles of " the Roman youth might be ſhaken, if they ſhould " become converts to this mode of philoſophizing, " he was anxious to prevent its reception; and did " not reſt, till he had prevailed with the ſenate to " diſmiſs the ambaſſadors, with their final anſwer." *

Perhaps the verſatile opinions and principles of the Jeſuits may be aſcribed to this cauſe; for I have been informed by ſeveral of them, with whom I have converſed, that their academical exerciſes are chiefly directed to make them ſubtle diſputants. How far the ſame obſervation may be applicable to the members of a learned profeſſion, highly reſpected in this country, I will not preſume to determine. But there is too much reaſon to apprehend, that the cuſtom of pleading for any client, without diſcrimination of right or wrong, muſt leſſen the regard due to thoſe important diſtinctions, and deaden the moral ſenſibility of the heart.

* *Plut. in Vit. Caton.* Melmoth's Cato, p. 190.

I have

I have been too ſtrongly impreſſed with the love of truth, replied Sophron, to debate with indifference about it; and therefore to guard againſt deception, from "what the nurſe, and what the prieſt have taught," I would examine my moſt ſerious opinions, and try whether I cannot, by direct oppoſition, or by the teſt of ridicule, invalidate their authority.

I have already given you my reaſons againſt this practice, anſwered Philocles; and I could enforce them by many examples of the pernicious conſequences of it, which have fallen under my obſervation. But private hiſtory is invidious; and I ſhall therefore confine myſelf to one caſe of public notoriety. The academy of Dijon, many years ago, propoſed the following whimſical prize queſtion, viz. "Whether the "ſciences may not be deemed more hurtful, than be-"neficial to ſociety?" M. Rouſſeau became a candidate for the laurel, and aſſumed the affirmative ſide of the queſtion; probably becauſe it furniſhed him with a better opportunity of diſplaying his genius, and powers of perſuaſion. * His diſcourſe was received with the higheſt applauſe; he became the dupe of his own rhetoric; and adopted as a philoſopher, the maxims which he had delivered as an orator. From this period commenced his fame, his paradoxes, and his misfortunes. † He combated the common

* *Major eſt ille qui judicium abſtulit, quam qui meruit.* Cic.

† Helvetius.

ſenſe of mankind, with all the zeal of a reformer; and his writings proved like the bubble which glitters, expands, and burſts in the ſunſhine: They were dazzling, empty, and ſoon forgotten. I am inclined to ſuſpect that Machiaval's Prince, the Fable of the Bees, and other productions of this nature, originated from cauſes ſomewhat ſimilar to thoſe which gave riſe to the chimæras of Rouſſeau. And I have been informed that a celebrated adverſary of Chriſtianity, by yielding up his judgment and imagination to a particular ſet of arguments, has become ſucceſſively a papiſt, a muſſulman, and an infidel.

But permit me, Sophron, to ſuggeſt to you a caution of ſtill higher importance, which regards ſuch of your intellectual purſuits as relate to the Deity. Religion may be conſidered both as a ſpeculative ſcience, and as a practical principle. In the former view, it conſtitutes the ſublimeſt object of the underſtanding, and the moſt intereſting topic of rational inveſtigation. In the latter, it is a ſpring of motion, and excites all the devout affections of veneration, gratitude, and love. When you contemplate, as a philoſopher, the character of the Divine Being, you muſt be ſtruck with reverence at the proofs, which offer themſelves, of his boundleſs power, univerſal preſence, and infinite duration: And theſe attributes, reflecting dignity and luſtre on the more amiable perfections of his nature, will heighten the impreſſion made by the relation, which he

he ſtands in to you, as your Creator, Benefactor, and Friend. Thus the principle of piety will ſubſiſt in your mind, in its full force; ſupported by the authority of reaſon, and harmoniſing with all the feelings of your heart. But if you deſcend, from theſe general and exalted views of the Divine Being, into minute diſquiſitions concerning his eſſence, the freedom of his agency, and other ſubtleties beyond the human ken, you will ſoon damp the ardour of devotion in your breaſt: And ſhould you make theſe inquiries the common matter of academical diſputation, or of familiar debate, the ſacred flame will be extinguiſhed altogether.* The poet, lately quoted, has deſcribed ſome of the fallen angels, who had been driven from heaven for impiety and rebellion, as "ſitting on a hill retired, and reaſoning high"

> "Of providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,
> "Fix'd fate, free will, foreknowledge abſolute;
> "And found no end, in wand'ring mazes loſt." †

I mean not, however, to condemn, indiſcriminately, all metaphyſical reſearches of this kind. It is natural for men of a ſpeculative turn, to extend their views of theology beyond the clear limits either of reaſon, or of revelation: And if their inquiries be conducted with that humility and reverence, which ſuch ſubjects

* See Dr. Gregory's Comparative View; and Mrs. Barbauld on Devotional Taſte.

† Milton's Paradiſe Loſt, B. II. p. 550.

ſhould inſpire, they may tend to invigorate the underſtanding, without depraving the heart. The example of Locke, Newton, Clarke, Hartley, and other diſtinguiſhed philoſophers, affords ſufficient confirmation of this truth; and at the ſame time evinces a ſtill more pleaſing and important one, that Religion numbers, amongſt her votaries, men who have dignified and adorned human nature, by their genius, virtue, and learning. I would particularly recommend to your notice, Sophron, I need not ſay to your imitation, the conduct of Mr. Boyle; who had ſo profound a veneration for the Deity, that the name of God was never mentioned by him, without a pauſe in his diſcourſe.* This great philoſopher, alſo, had ſuch delicate notions of veracity, and was ſo ſenſible of the imperfection of human knowledge, even when derived from experiment, that in the Preface to his Eſſays, he makes an apology for the frequent uſe of the words *perhaps*, *it ſeems*, *'tis not improbable*, as implying a diffidence of the juſtneſs of his opinions: And this diffidence aroſe, as he informs us, from repeated obſervation, that what pleaſed him for a while, was afterwards diſgraced by ſome further, or more recent diſcovery.

Here Philocles was interrupted by the arrival of a ſtranger; whoſe preſence put an end to the converſation.

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* Britiſh Biography, Vol. V. p. 248.

ON THE

ADVANTAGES OF A TASTE

FOR THE GENERAL

BEAUTIES OF NATURE.

ME VERO PRIMUM DULCES ANTE OMNIA MUSÆ
ACCIPIANT! ----------
--- RURA MIHI, ET RIGUI PLACEANT IN VALLIBUS AMNES;
FLUMINA AMEM, SYLVASQUE INGLORIUS.

VIRG. GEORG. L. II. LIN. 475.

THAT ſenſibility to beauty, which, when cultivated and improved, we term Taſte, is univerſally diffuſed through the human ſpecies: And it is moſt uniform with reſpect to thoſe objects, which, being out of our power, are not liable to variation, from accident, caprice, or faſhion. The verdant lawn, the ſhady grove, the variegated landſcape, the boundleſs ocean, and the ſtarry firmament, are contemplated with pleaſure by every beholder. But the emotions of different ſpectators, though ſimilar in kind, differ widely in degree: And to reliſh, with full

full delight, the enchanting ſcenes of nature, the mind muſt be uncorrupted by avarice, ſenſuality, or ambition; quick in her ſenſibilities; elevated in her ſentiments; and devout in her affections. He, who poſſeſſes ſuch exalted powers of perception and enjoyment, may almoſt ſay, with the Poet,

" I care not, Fortune! what you me deny;
" You cannot rob me of free Nature's grace;
" You cannot ſhut the windows of the ſky,
" Thro' which Aurora ſhews her brightening face;
" You cannot bar my conſtant feet to trace
" The woods and lawns, by living ſtream, at eve:
" Let health my nerves and finer fibres brace,
" And I their toys to the great children leave:
" Of fancy, reaſon, virtue, nought can me bereave." *

Perhaps ſuch ardent enthuſiaſm may not be compatible with the neceſſary toils, and active offices, which Providence has aſſigned to the generality of men. But there are none, to whom ſome portion of it may not prove advantageous; and if it were cheriſhed, by each individual, in that degree, which is conſiſtent with the indiſpenſable duties of his ſtation, the felicity of human life would be conſiderably augmented. From this ſource, the refined and vivid pleaſures of the imagination are almoſt entirely derived: And the elegant arts owe their choiceſt beauties to a taſte for the contemplation of nature. Painting and ſculpture are expreſs imitations of

* Thomſon's Caſtle of Indolence.

viſible

viſible objects: And where would be the charms of poetry, if diveſted of the imagery and embelliſhments, which ſhe borrows from rural ſcenes? Painters, ſtatuaries, and poets, therefore, are always ambitious to acknowledge themſelves the pupils of nature; and as their ſkill increaſes, they grow more and more delighted with every view of the animal and vegetable world. But the pleaſure reſulting from admiration is tranſient; and to cultivate taſte, without regard to its influence on the paſſions and affections, "is to rear a tree for its bloſſoms, which "is capable of yielding the richeſt, and moſt valu-"able fruit." * Phyſical and moral beauty bear ſo intimate a relation to each other, that they may be conſidered as different gradations in the ſcale of excellence; and the knowledge and reliſh of the former, ſhould be deemed only a ſtep to the nobler and more permanent enjoyments of the latter.

Whoever has viſited the Leaſowes, in Warwickſhire, muſt have felt the force and propriety of an inſcription, which meets the eye, at the entrance into thoſe delightful grounds.

"Would you then taſte the tranquil ſcene?
"Be ſure your boſoms be ſerene;
"Devoid of hate, devoid of ſtrife,
"Devoid of all that poiſons life:
"And much it 'vails you, in their place
"To graft the love of human race." †

* Shenſtone. † Id.

Now

Now ſuch ſcenes contribute powerfully to inſpire that ſerenity, which is neceſſary to enjoy, and to heighten their beauties. By a ſecret contagion, the ſoul catches the harmony, which ſhe contemplates; and the frame within, aſſimilates itſelf to that which is without. For,

> " Who can forbear to ſmile with Nature? Can
> " The ſtormy paſſions in the boſom roll,
> " While every gale is peace, and every grove
> " Is melody? " *

In this ſtate of ſweet compoſure, we become ſuſceptible of virtuous impreſſions, from almoſt every ſurrounding object. The patient ox is viewed with generous complacency; the guileleſs ſheep, with pity; and the playful lamb raiſes emotions of tenderneſs and love. We rejoice with the horſe, in his liberty and exemption from toil, whilſt he ranges at large through enamelled paſtures; and the frolics of the colt would afford unmixed delight, did we not recollect the bondage, which he is ſoon to undergo.

* Thomſon's Seaſons, firſt Edit.

Horace, when he breaks forth into the animated exclamation,

> " *O, rus! quando ego te aſpiciam, quandoque licebit*
> " *Nunc veterum libris, nunc ſomno et inertibus horis*
> " *Ducere ſolicitæ jucunda oblivia vitæ;* "
>
> Hor. Sat. VI.

ſeems to regret the want of that heartfelt complacency, which the buſtle, pomp, and pleaſures of imperial Rome could not afford.

We

We are charmed with the ſongs of birds, ſoothed with the buzz of inſects, and pleaſed with the ſportive motions of fiſhes, becauſe theſe are expreſſions of enjoyment; and we exult in the felicity of the whole animated creation. Thus an equal and extenſive benevolence is called forth into exertion; and having *felt* a common intereſt in the gratifications of inferior beings, we ſhall be no longer indifferent to their ſufferings, or become wantonly inſtrumental in producing them.

It ſeems to be the intention of Providence, that the lower orders of animals ſhould be ſubſervient to the comfort, convenience, and ſuſtenance of man. But his right of dominion extends no farther; and if this right be exerciſed with mildneſs, humanity, and juſtice, the ſubjects of his power will be no leſs benefitted than himſelf. For various ſpecies of living creatures are annually multiplied by human art, improved in their perceptive powers by human culture, and plentifully fed by human induſtry. The relation, therefore, is reciprocal, between ſuch animals and man; and he may ſupply his own wants by the uſe of their labour, the produce of their bodies, and even the ſacrifice of their lives; whilſt he co-operates with all-gracious Heaven, in promoting HAPPINESS, the great end of exiſtence.

But though it be true, that *partial evil*, with reſpect to different orders of ſenſitive beings, may be

univerſal

univerſal good; and that it is a wiſe and benevolent inſtitution of nature, to make deſtruction itſelf, within certain limitations, the cauſe of an increaſe of life and enjoyment; yet a generous perſon will extend his compaſſionate regards to every individual, that ſuffers for his ſake: And whilſt he ſighs

> " Ev'n for the kid, or lamb, that pours its life
> " Beneath the bloody knife;" *

he will naturally be ſolicitous to mitigate pain, both in duration and degree, by the gentleſt modes of inflicting it.

I am inclined to believe, however, that this ſenſe of humanity would ſoon be obliterated, and that the heart would grow callous to every ſoft impreſſion, were it not for the benignant influence of the ſmiling face of nature. The Count de Lauzun, when impriſoned, by Louis XIV, in the caſtle of Pignerol, amuſed himſelf, during a long period of time, with catching flies, and delivering them to be devoured by a rapacious ſpider. Such an entertainment was equally ſingular and cruel; and inconſiſtent, I believe, with his former character, and ſubſequent turn of mind. But his cell had no window; and received only a glimmering light, from an aperture in the roof. In leſs unfavourable circumſtances, may we not preſume, that inſtead of ſporting with miſery, he would have releaſed the agoniſing flies; and bid them enjoy that freedom, of which he himſelf was bereaved?

* Lord Lyttelton.

But

But the taſte for natural beauty is ſubſervient to higher purpoſes, than thoſe which have been enumerated: And the cultivation of it not only refines and humaniſes, but dignifies and exalts the affections. It elevates them to the admiration and love of that Being, who is the Author of all that is fair, ſublime, and good in the creation. Scepticiſm and irreligion are hardly compatible with the ſenſibility of heart,* which ariſes from a juſt and lively reliſh of the wiſdom, harmony, and order ſubſiſting in the world around us: And emotions of piety muſt ſpring up ſpontaneouſly in the boſom, that is in uniſon with all animated nature. Actuated by this divine inſpiration, man finds "a fane in every ſacred grove:" † And glowing with devout fervour, he joins his ſong to the univerſal chorus; or muſes the praiſe of the Almighty, in ſilence more expreſſive. Thus they

"Whom Nature's works can charm, with GOD himſelf
"Hold converſe; grow familiar, day by day,
"With his conceptions; act upon his plan;
"And form to his, the reliſh of their ſouls." ‡

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* See Gregory's Comparative View.

† Thomſon. ‡ Akenſide.

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